

# Reader's digest

JULY 2014

## BEST OF AMERICA

2014

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UPLIFTING THINGS THAT COULD  
ONLY HAPPEN HERE

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# On The Road

with  
**GEICO**  
and Reader's Digest



## The History, Heritage and Humor of GEICO

**Leo and Lillian Goodwin** had to have a pretty sunny outlook to start a company in the height of the Great Depression. But their ingenuity and forethought paid off growing GEICO from 3,700 policies in their first year to insuring over 20 million vehicles today. The road wasn't always smooth, but keeping a smile on customers' faces has always been the best policy.

### Get the GEICO Daily Giggle

Text **GEICO** to **51684**  
to get GEICO's  
**Joke of the Day**  
from *Reader's Digest*



Here's a *Reader's Digest* laugh to bring you back:

## 1930s

"Once in Virginia," said a speaker who had received an introduction that promised more than he felt he could deliver, "I passed a small church displaying a large sign. It read 'Annual Strawberry Festival' and, below in small letters, 'On account of the Depression, prunes will be served.'"

—*Boston transcript*

### Did You Know? Driving Tips:

Driving in hot weather is serious business. Here are some tips to keep you on the road this season:

- Check radiator fluid levels - a properly working radiator will prevent overheating
- Plan to drive early in the morning or late in the evening when traveling long distances - cooler weather is easier on your engine
- Never leave children or pets unattended in a car, even for a moment - a closed car can heat up over 100 degrees very quickly
- Keep a cooler with chilled drinks on hand for passengers - happy, hydrated passengers make driving more fun

For more of your favorite jokes visit: [www.rd.com/humor](http://www.rd.com/humor)

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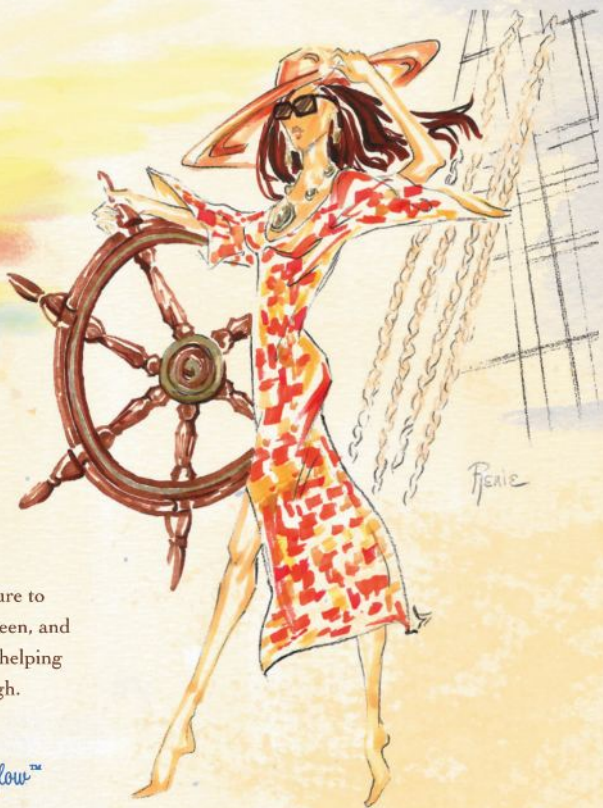
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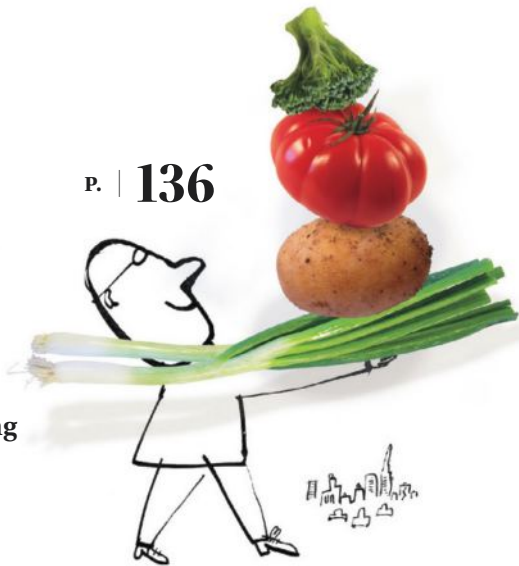
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The top four winners of our Made in America photo competition.

# StainGuide



**OxiClean™ Versatile** tackles over **101 different types of stains**, is **color safe** and **chlorine free**.



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# Editor's Note

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## The Charm of a True Story



**ON OUR LAST EXTENDED VACATION**—halfway around the world in places without televisions or cell phone coverage—my family fell into a rather interesting evening routine. Once the sun went down and the stars came out, either Steve or I would tell our nine-year-old girls one “amazing true story” from memory.

Some of our tales were dramatic, like the sinking of the *Titanic*. But all types held the girls' interest. Steve mesmerized them with Michelangelo: how the artist wanted to sculpt, but the pope insisted he spend over four years painting the Sistine Chapel. Olivia was fascinated by the detail that Michelangelo almost went blind from the paint dripping into his eyes as he worked on the scaffolding, painting the ceiling.

I told “The Little Boat That Sailed Through Time”—about the endurance of a man's toy boat, from our June issue—and “A Lost Boy Builds a Family,” about the journey of a Sudanese refugee, from May. For each, Sophia delighted in guessing the end. It surprised her both times.

What impressed my daughters most was that these were true stories about real people. Every night, they begged, “Tell one more! Please, one more!” That's how I felt about your tales, which poured in during our 100-Word True Stories contest. We showcased the winners in last month's issue, but we couldn't stop there. This month, we're starting the column “Your True Stories” in our Voices & Views section.

Do you have a story in you? Go to [rd.com/stories](http://rd.com/stories) to submit it. If we run your piece in the magazine, we'll pay you \$100.



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE VACCARIELLO; WARDROBE STYLIST: ELYSHA LENKIN



I invite you to e-mail me at [liz@rd.com](mailto:liz@rd.com) and follow me at [facebook.com/lizvaccariello](https://www.facebook.com/lizvaccariello) and @LizVacc on Twitter.

# Letters

COMMENTS ON THE MAY ISSUE



## QUICK FIX

I have had a problem for years with a cat refusing to use the litter box. Your article “50 Secrets Pets Won’t Tell You” mentioned that cats don’t like to feel trapped. I removed the lids from the litter boxes, and my cat used them immediately! Who knew the solution was so simple?

**DIANE OVERMAN,**  
*Asheville, North Carolina*

## LOVE WITHOUT WORDS

I was deeply moved by your poignant account of sitting with your dad during his final days (Editor’s Note, “Hearing with My Heart”). It reminded me of a similar experience with my dad during his last days. Rather than sounds, I recall his gestures when he couldn’t speak: With his index finger, he pointed first to his eye, then to his heart, and finally to me, which was his way of communicating “I love you.” That happened over 20 years ago and has meant so much to me that I now

use the gesture frequently with my grandchildren, who love it. Thanks for sharing your story.

**JERROLD L. BROTMAN,** *Timonium, Maryland*

## WARNING LABEL

I am so disappointed in the FDA’s lack of punishment for food-growing and -storing establishments (“Hard to Swallow”). Just knowing that the “safe” and “healthy” foods in the grocery store are potentially life-threatening turns my stomach. I hope with all the unfortunate illnesses and deaths caused by

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAN ROBERTS

these foods, the FDA and USDA can come up with a better inspection policy to save lives. That story was a real eye-opener!

**ABBY SANDBERG**, *Princeton, Illinois*

I am grateful to *RD* for exposing the potential dangers of our food supply. At the same time, I'm disappointed that no steps were provided to consumers on how to evaluate what we currently have in our homes, how to be smarter shoppers, or how to put pressure on government agencies to better protect us.

*L. P., via e-mail*

## A CAUTIONARY TALE

"Crushed by Corn" hit so close to home that it gave me goose bumps. I was 14 years old in rural Minnesota when one of my closest friends was sucked into a truckful of corn that was being unloaded on his family's farm. Three grown men got ahold of his arms, but their strength was no match for the powerful force. Thank you for this story—kids (and even adults) may think that piles of corn are safe to stand or play on, but that is obviously not the case. I am so glad that Arick Baker was saved.

**KIM DAILEY**, *Big Lake, Minnesota*

## COMFORT FOOD

I, too, was born and raised in a small Central Texas town where beans and corn bread was a staple meal ("Mama's Corn Bread & Beans"). I still eat beans and corn bread when my older sister prepares it and invites me over. What a wonderful trip down memory lane.

**PATRICIA UTTERBACK**, *Fort Worth, Texas*

## AWAY WE GO

"Dear Mom: Let's Take a Trip Together" brought me so much joy. For a while now, my mom and I have wanted to go on an adventure, just us. To see my feelings on the subject expressed in a beautifully written story made my day. I even cut out the article, highlighted certain lines, and slipped it into my mom's bag so she could read it at work.

*R. C., via e-mail*

## MESSAGE FROM A FAN

I can't thank Miguel Alvarez enough, from the bottom of my heart (Everyday Heroes, "The Caring Janitor"). My mom was in a senior home, and I would have just been beside myself if that had happened to her facility. He is God's blessing to us all.

**MARY SCHLEMBACH**, *Houston, Texas*

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# EVERYDAY HEROES



When a water-loving ten-year-old saw a little girl in danger, he dived in to save her

## The Brave Boy Scout

BY MELODY WARNICK

 IT WAS A SIZZLING June day on the outskirts of Austin, Texas, and Sammy Armstrong couldn't wait to get in the water.

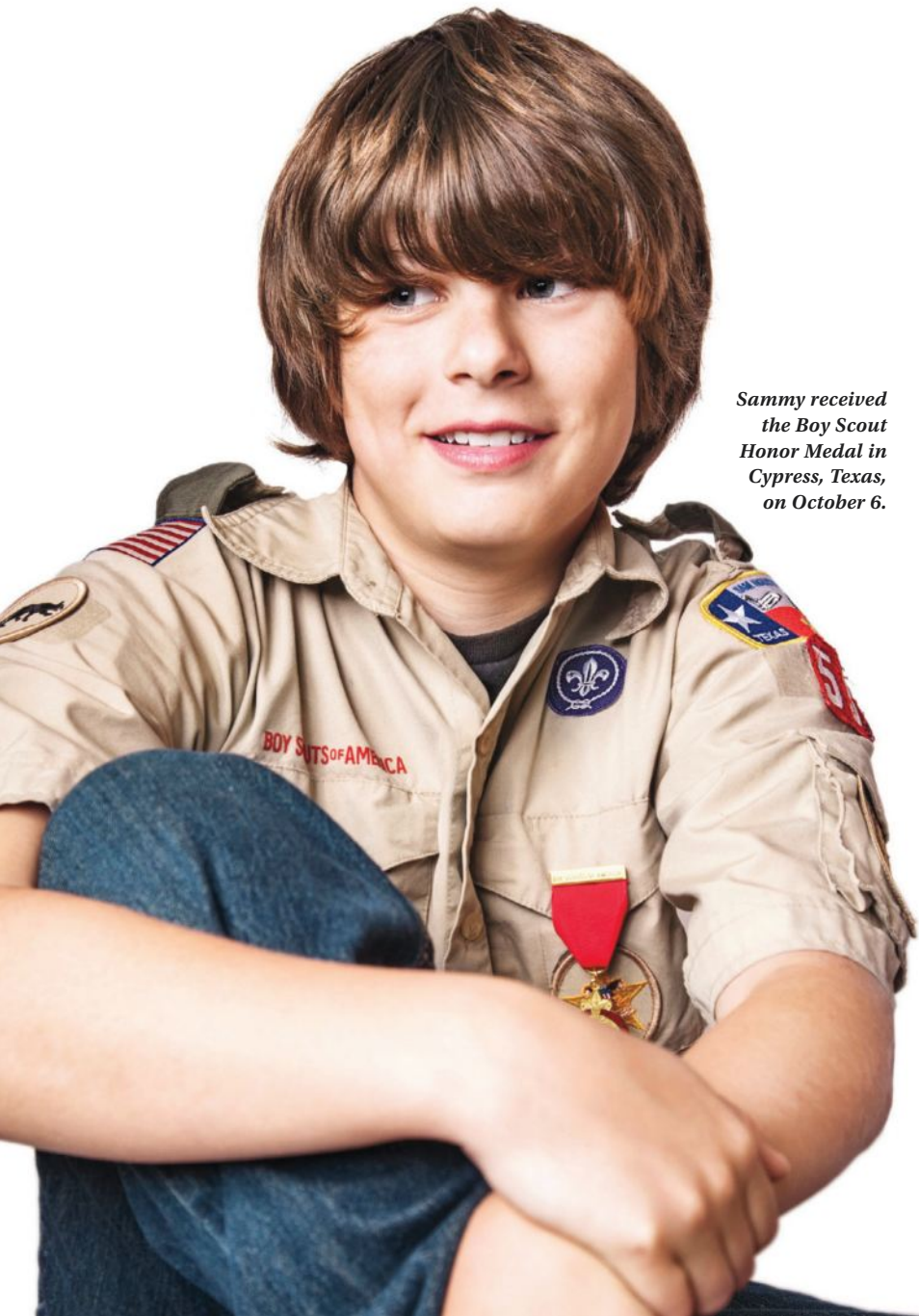
The ten-year-old was on a camping trip at McKinney Falls State Park with his mom, Kelley, his dad, Stacey, and his brothers, Ben, eight, and Willy, two.

Around 11 a.m., Sammy's mother and little brother Ben dropped the family kayak into Onion Creek, which meanders through the park's 750 acres, and paddled off. Sammy and Willy accompanied their dad to Upper Falls, which marks the point

where placid Onion Creek plummets 12 feet over a rock ledge. At the top of the waterfall, a limestone pathway traverses the creek bed. Below is a swimming hole, 20 feet deep in some places.

With his father watching from the rocks above, Sammy jumped in. He was a good swimmer—he'd been on the swim team in his hometown of Cypress, Texas. Sammy played in the water for a while, eventually pulling himself out of the swimming hole and onto a warm ➔





*Sammy received  
the Boy Scout  
Honor Medal in  
Cypress, Texas,  
on October 6.*

boulder and watching a group of children tramp through the creek bed above. They were summer campers from Austin who, along with their counselors, were headed back to the visitors' parking lot after a morning hike. As the kids passed Stacey and Willy, a tiny five-year-old girl reached down to grab a water bottle and lost her balance. In an instant, she was swept over the falls.

"A girl went over the waterfall!" Stacey shouted. Sammy caught a glimpse of the girl's arm and the top of her dark head as the roiling currents pushed her into the hollow

beneath the rock ledge, hiding her from the crowd above. She bobbed up and down, struggling in the deep water. "I'm kind of freaked out at this point," Sammy says now.

His father, with Willy clasped under one arm, walked toward the edge of the waterfall to try to locate the girl, but Sammy was the one in striking distance. "You have to get her out of there!" Stacey yelled down to him. Sammy was nervous, but "my dad just looked at me, and I understood what I had to do."

Years in the Boy Scouts had taught Sammy never to enter a dangerous situation without an exit strategy. The ten-year-old took a few seconds

to consider the situation, then he dived in, cutting through the churn of the waterfall. In a few seconds, he was next to the struggling girl. Panicking, she tried to climb on top of him. "I went under for a little bit, then came back up," Sammy says. "I stayed calm, but inside, my heart was going about Mach 5."

“  
***Exit plan in  
 place, Sammy  
 dived in, cutting  
 straight through  
 the churn of the  
 waterfall.***  
 ”

Treading water an arm's length away from the girl, he asked her if she could swim. When she said no, Sammy carefully pulled her onto his back and followed the rock wall's slick contours around the edge of the waterfall toward the shore.

Soon, someone threw a swim float from the bank and pulled both kids from the water. The little girl sprawled on the ground, coughing and too stunned to cry.

When Kelley walked onto the scene after her kayaking trip with Ben, she saw the crowd gathered near the swimming hole, and her heart sank. Then a woman came up and told her that Sammy had saved a little girl's life. "Sammy says he couldn't do it now," says Kelley. "But I know he could because of who he is."

Now a seventh grader, Sammy admits, "When I got in the water, I didn't really think about the consequences."



A blind man rescues a woman from a fire

# He Did What He Had to Do

BY ALYSSA JUNG

AT ABOUT 10 P.M. on September 7, 2013, Tommy Barber and his friend Susan Laney were exiting the elevator of her Fort Pierce, Florida, apartment building when they smelled smoke. “My dogs!” Susan yelled as she ran down the hall to her apartment. Tommy, 54, who is blind, walked toward the smoke.

“I was standing across from Susan’s apartment door; I took four or five steps to the right, and smoke hit me right in the face,” he says. “I banged on the door, yelling, ‘Anybody home?’ But nobody answered.”

Suddenly the door opened, and more smoke billowed out. Tommy heard coughing and reached behind the door, waving his arm until he felt someone. It was Diane Marshall, who lived there. He grabbed her arm and pulled her into the hall, then ran back to the smoke-filled apartment.

Susan and an apartment manager arrived with a fire extinguisher. As Susan pointed the nozzle at the flames, Tommy squeezed the handle until the fire died down.



*“Tommy made a difference,” says Fire Chief Ron Parrish, left.*

Diane had fallen asleep with a pot on the stove, and it had caught fire, engulfing the stove top in flames. She later called Tommy to thank him. “I could have [died],” she told a local news station.

As it turned out, battling flames was second nature for Tommy—he had been a firefighter with the St. Lucie County Fire District for about a year in the 1980s. He developed glaucoma in 2000 and lost his sight.

Last November, the St. Lucie County Fire District awarded him and Susan the Citizen Hero Award for their actions. “I wasn’t scared,” says Tommy. “It was just something I had to do.”



# SAVINGS THAT STAND OUT

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# VOICES & VIEWS

Department of Wit

## My Diary: By Bruce, The Shark In *Jaws*



BY JOHN MOE FROM *DEAR LUKE, WE NEED TO TALK. DARTH*

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (MOE)



JOHN MOE  
is a writer, a  
reporter, and  
the host of  
*American  
Public Media's  
Wits.*

- **APRIL 7:** So this is the journal I'm supposed to be writing, as prescribed by my latest therapist. I hope it helps, but I have to be honest, I doubt it will. I WANT TO STOP EATING EVERYONE! That's it! That's all I want! I've been through, what, five therapists? And I've eaten three of them. I can't form any meaningful relationships with anyone, because sooner or later, CHOMP. It's got to stop. I'm nervous because summer is coming up. Maybe this summer will be different.
- **MAY 2:** This summer WILL be different. THIS SUMMER MUST BE DIFFERENT!
- **MAY 12:** How could the summer be different? I'm a SHARK. A GREAT WHITE SHARK. A nonstop killing machine! NO! ➤

No. I am in control here. Biology is not destiny. I have to think positively. I can be any nonstop machine I want to be. A nonstop caring machine. A nonstop nurturing machine.

■ **MAY 31:** Tourists are showing up. I ate kelp and seaweed today. I've read, like, three books this week just to keep my mind off things. Jacqueline Susann. Better than I expected.

■ **JUNE 14:** OK. Deep breath. I'm ashamed to even be writing this. But I fell off the wagon **BIG TIME**. It was night, and I was swimming around (I don't sleep), and I thought everything would be fine because what human would be out in the ocean at night? Then this lady shows up swimming around. Naked! I see that, and I'm thinking, No nylon swimsuits, no goggles to deal with, just dinner. I was so disgusted with myself that I couldn't even eat all of her.

■ **JUNE 23:** Guilt does funny things to a shark. When I feel guilty about something (like, oh, **EATING A WOMAN!**), I start to hate myself. When I start to hate myself, I engage in self-destructive behavior.

■ **JUNE 26:** There's no doubt about it: I'm spiraling. Almost sank a boat today. Ate the captain. Most of him, anyway. Started innocently enough. I saw the boat out there on the water, and I remembered what I'd read in a self-help book: "Use your tongue instead of your teeth." I figured I could swim up and talk to the guy about my issues. Then, before I know it, he's whapping me on the nose, which is **NOT COOL**, and one thing led to another ... I need to remember that it's not enough to want to reach people. I have to understand how I'm coming across to them as well.

■ **JULY 4:** Ate another dude. Maybe I was still mad at the boat captain. Or mad at my mother who birthed me and then just swam away. Or mad at myself.

■ **JULY 7:** They're coming for me. I see their boat. Looks like there's an old sea captain, a sort of wild-eyed young researcher, and Roy Scheider on it. I'm going to them. One way or another, we're going to end this thing.  
*(Journal ends)*



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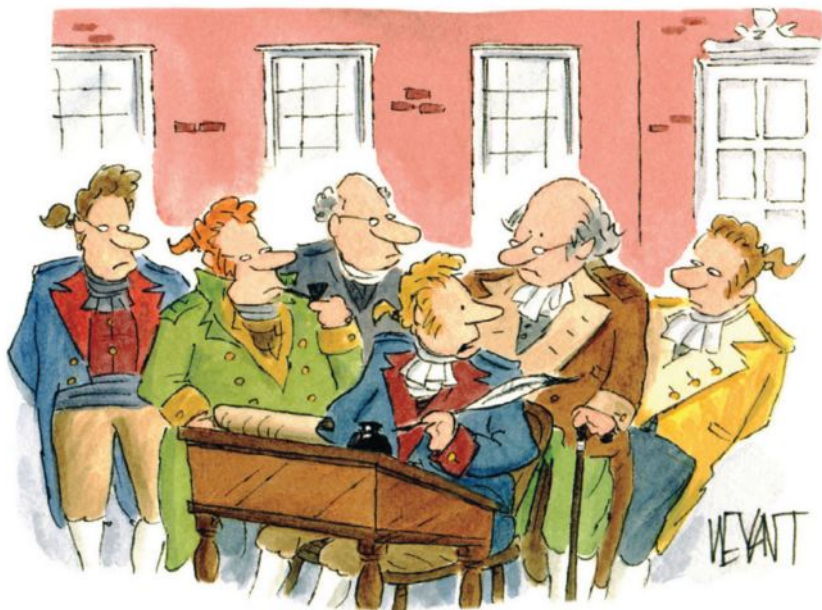
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# Life

IN THESE UNITED STATES



*“Are you sure you want to go with Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, instead of Ribs, Fireworks, and Beer?”*

**I RENAMED MY IPOD** The Titanic, so when I plug it in, it says, “The Titanic is syncing.”

Source: [textsfromlastnight.com](http://textsfromlastnight.com)

**MY YOUNG SON** declared, “When I grow up, I’m going to marry you, Mommy.”

“You can’t marry your own

mother,” said his older sister.

“Then I’ll marry you.”

“You can’t marry me either.”

He looked confused, so I explained, “You can’t marry someone in your own family.”

“You mean I have to marry a total stranger?!” he cried.

**PHYLIS SHOWERS, San Diego, California**

**HERE IS** the best-ever backhanded compliment from a kid about a present: “Dear Genie, thanks for the toy. I’ll play with it when I’m bored.”

**DEBBIE SKOLNIK, Scarsdale, New York**

**WHEN I ANNOUNCED** that I was getting married, my excited mother said, “You have to have the rehearsal dinner someplace opulent, where there’s dancing.”

My father, seeing where this was heading, said, “I’ll pay you a thousand dollars to elope.”

“And you have to have a breakfast, for the people who are coming from out of town.”

“Two thousand.”

“We’ll need a photographer. Oh, and what colors do you want for the reception?”

“Five thousand!”

We eloped to Spain.

**MARY NICHOLS, Arlington, Virginia**

**I WAS NINE MONTHS** pregnant and browsing at a garage sale when the homeowner asked me if I knew whether I was having a boy or a girl. I told her I didn’t.

As I left a few minutes later, she yelled after me, “I hope you get the sex you want!”

**MELANIE RILEY, Lakemoor, Illinois**

**ASKED TO PICK** the worst year ever, film director Peter Segal chose 1848, “the year gold was discovered at Sutter’s Mill. Until then, you could

find a nice piece of land in California, pitch your tent, and call it home. The housing market here has been a living hell ever since.” Source: *The Atlantic*

**I ASKED MY** brother-in-law, the father of four boys, “If you had it to do all over again, would you still have kids?”

“Yes,” he said. “Just not these four.”

**SHEILA LEE, Lorain, Ohio**



## THAT REMINDS ME OF A JOKE

### HERE’S THE NEWS:

An Italian man under house arrest for dealing drugs begged police to put him in jail. According to authorities, he asked to serve the rest of his sentence behind bars “because living with his wife was particularly difficult and unbearable.” The cops were happy to oblige. Source: [thelocal.it](http://thelocal.it)

### HERE’S THE LAUGH:

After 12 years in prison, a man finally breaks out. When he gets home, filthy and exhausted, his wife says, “Where have you been? You escaped eight hours ago!”

**Wanna dish the dirt on friends or family? It could be worth \$100. See page 9 for details, or go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).**



Anger may be justified, but “getting even” won’t make you feel better

# Why We Forgive

BY **DESMOND TUTU** FROM *THE BOOK OF FORGIVING*



*Archbishop Emeritus  
DESMOND  
TUTU won the  
Nobel Peace  
Prize in 1984.  
He served  
as chair of  
South Africa’s  
Truth and  
Reconciliation  
Commission.*

☛ **THERE WERE SO MANY NIGHTS** when I, as a young boy, had to watch helplessly as my father verbally and physically abused my mother. I can still recall the smell of alcohol, see the fear in my mother’s eyes, and feel the hopeless despair that comes when we see people we love hurting each other in incomprehensible ways. I would not wish that experience on anyone, especially not a child. If I dwell in those memories, I can feel myself wanting to hurt my father back, in the same ways he hurt my mother and in ways of which I was incapable as a small boy. I see my mother’s face and I see this gentle human being whom I loved so very much and who did nothing to deserve the pain inflicted upon her.

When I recall this story, I realize how difficult the process of forgiving truly is. Intellectually, I know my father caused pain because he was in pain. Spiritually, I know my faith tells me my father deserves to be forgiven as God forgives us all. But it is still difficult. The traumas we have witnessed or experienced live on in our memories. Even years later they can cause us fresh pain each time we recall them.

Are you hurt and suffering? Is the injury new, or is it an old, unhealed wound? Know that what was done to you was wrong, unfair, and undeserved. You are right to be outraged. And it is perfectly normal to want to hurt back when you have been



hurt. But hurting back rarely satisfies. We think it will, but it doesn't. If I slap you after you slap me, it does not lessen the sting I feel on my own face, nor does it diminish my sadness as to the fact you have struck me. Retaliation gives, at best, only momentary respite from our emotional pain. The only way to experience healing and peace is to forgive. Until we can forgive, we remain locked in our pain and locked out of the possibility of experiencing healing and freedom, locked out of the possibility of being at peace.

Without forgiveness, we remain

tethered to the person who harmed us. We are bound with chains of bitterness, tied together, trapped. Until we can forgive the person who harmed us, that person will hold the keys to our happiness; that person will be our jailor.

When we forgive, we take back control of our own fate and our feelings. We become our own liberators. Forgiveness, in other words, is the best form of self-interest. This is true both spiritually and scientifically. We don't forgive to help the other person. We don't forgive for others. We forgive for ourselves. **R**

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# Your True Stories

IN 100 WORDS

## QUIET PLACE

**M**y grandmother's home was one room. She lived in a rooming house. A bed, a dresser, a hot plate, and a shared refrigerator. We, her grandchildren, loved it! Our parents sent us on the train the 50 miles to Galveston, Texas, every summer. We slept on the floor, got up at daylight to play cards and eat pancakes. Then we walked to the beach. When I think of the peace, the love, and how simple things were, I know this is where I got the quiet place in my heart.

MARY EDWARDS, *Pontotoc, Mississippi*

## JOURNEY ACROSS THE SEA

**M**y story began one morning when I fled Vietnam with my father. We headed to China, hoping for a boat to Hong Kong. One night, we tried for a boat, but it was full, leaving us behind to wander the perilous dark. Nearby, buffaloes stood fixed, dogs barked, and crickets chirped. At one point, we stumbled over a grave site, and




Father kowtowed for forgiveness. Then somewhere a stranger appeared and sheltered us. Another boat became available eventually, and in the end, I disembarked into a whole new world to begin yet another story of my life.

THU HUYNH, *Honolulu, Hawaii*

## THE BROWN WALLET

**W**hen I was ten, I found a wallet. There wasn't any money in it, but I knew how these things worked. I couldn't wait to return it and get my reward! All day I called the number from the brown leather wallet. Finally, my dad relented and drove me to the owner's address. Once there, we found a modest military housing unit with a torn screen door. As I rang the bell, my dad took three \$20 bills and tucked them into the wallet. Turns out my reward was getting to see one of life's true heroes in action.

ANN DOUGLAS VAUGHAN,  
*Newport News, Virginia*

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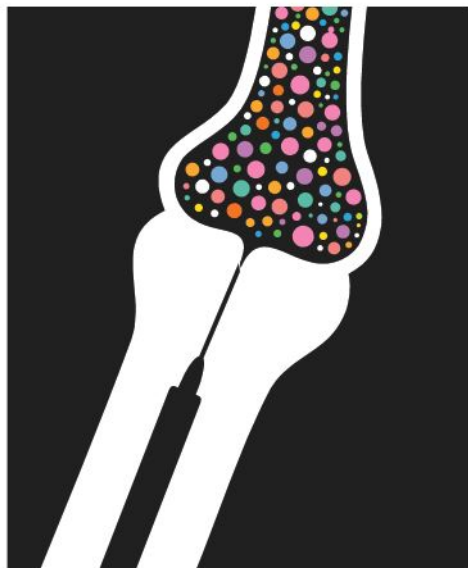


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Should a desperate mother be allowed to entice donors with cash?

## The Case of The Bone Marrow Buyer

BY VICKI GLEMOCKI

ALL DOREEN GUMMOE could do was hope. Her daughter Jordan Flynn had been born with Fanconi anemia, a rare inherited blood disorder that destroys bone marrow and makes sufferers highly susceptible to cancer. In spring 2012, when Jordan was 14, doctors found preleukemia cells in her blood. Without an immediate bone marrow transplant, she would likely die within months.

Typically, siblings are the most viable donors, but Jordan's brothers weren't matches. In 2005, Gummoie had given birth to twin girls, Julia and Jorja, who also have Fanconi anemia. Someday, they will likely each need transplants as well.

Gummoie, who lives in Lewiston,

Maine, turned to the National Marrow Donor Program's registry, praying to find a willing donor for Jordan in the 2 percent of people who are registered. Sometimes a donor isn't willing to undergo the procedure, even if he or she is a match. Years ago, transplants required a painful biopsy in the pelvic bone. Today, the most common, and virtually painless, method, apheresis, involves connecting donors to a machine that draws blood, harvests stem cells, and returns the blood, which naturally regenerates the stem cells that have been removed.

"If there were compensation for bone marrow donors, that might put more people in the registry," says ➤

Gummoe. “There’d be a better chance of finding a donor.”

However, according to 1984’s National Organ Transplant Act (NOTA), buying and selling organs, including bone marrow, is illegal. So in 2009—two and a half years before Jordan would need her transplant—Gummoe became the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit filed against the U.S. attorney general to challenge that law.

“It’s legal for people to pay for blood, sperm, and eggs,” argues Jeff Rowes, attorney for Institute for Justice, the nonprofit, public-interest

law firm that filed the suit. “Plus, it’s crazy to lump in bone marrow with solid organs, like kidneys, that a donor can’t grow back.”

The government responded that the “statute plainly classifies ‘bone marrow’ as an organ for which compensation is prohibited.” Furthermore, by enacting NOTA into law, Congress took the position that “human body parts should not be viewed as commodities.”

*Should it be legal to pay donors for bone marrow? You be the judge.*



## THE VERDICT

The government won a motion to dismiss by arguing that Congress had the “discretion” to ban compensation for bone marrow. Rowes took the case to the U.S. Appeals Court. He claimed that in 1984, when transplants were invasive, Congress didn’t consider bone marrow to be blood, which it had decided could be paid for. The court agreed, saying that compensation was permissible. But last October, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) filed a notice of intent to change the definition of *organ* to include the stem cells in question and make compensation illegal again. The notice is under review.

“If they do this, we will sue them,” says Rowes. “And we will beat them.”

Meanwhile, in April 2012, doctors found a match for Jordan through the registry. Now, more than two years post-transplant, she is in good health. Her nine-year-old sister Julia is doing well, but Jorja hasn’t been as lucky—her platelet counts are declining. Her mom expects that the family will eventually need to move forward with a transplant. “If HHS backs down,” Gummoe says, “we might be able to use the ruling to help Jorja.” **R**

Agree? Disagree? Sound off at [rd.com/judge](http://rd.com/judge).

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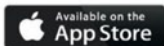


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*Penny*, Realtor

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# When I was growing up,

Choteau, MT

## ...The Little Match Girl.

Hearing that story always made me grateful for what I had—it wasn't much, but it was for sure more than others.

**JULIE MCCARTNEY HOLLARBRANTLEY**

## ...the story of my birth

during an Iowa blizzard in 1975. My mom had to get a ride with a snowplow driver, and they picked up a nurse on the way to meet an ambulance to get to the hospital.

**SUSAN KEEGAN**

Visalia, CA

## ...Charlotte's Web.

I'm 50 years old, and it's still a good read.

**KARLA KOTIL-SENF**

Los Angeles, CA

## ...Thumbelina!

For the longest time, I used to peer into plants to look for her. It wasn't until my mom told me it was only a fairy tale that I stopped.

**FARAHNAZ KHAN**

...*Make Way for Ducklings*, by Robert McCloskey. To this day, I love the story of how people went out of their way for a family of ducks.

## It shows humanity at its best.

**TRICIA TEOFISTO AVENIDO**

# my favorite story was...

## ...my dad's story

of how he hitchhiked from Rhode Island to Lima, Ohio, to see our mom when he returned from the Navy (before they were married).

SANDY BUNCH LANGHALS

Sioux Falls, SD

Hampton, NE

Bloomington, IL

Columbus Grove, OH

## ...The Boy Who Cried Wolf.

My dad used to tell it to me all the time for some reason.

STEVE CRABILL

Alexandria, AL

Jonesborough, TN

## ...whatever my momma was telling on the front porch.

EMILY EDDY

...whatever my momma was telling on the

front porch.

North Augusta, SC

...anything my mom would tell us about our dad and his siblings.

## My grandma Tucker

had 22 children!  
VICTORIA AUSTIN

## ...Little House on the Prairie.

I loved imagining how it would be to live like Laura.

SUSAN SKIBICKI WILSON

## ...world history!

What a story.  
RAYMOND JOHN SCHUPNER

Spring Valley, NY

Newark, DE

...Eek! There's a Mouse in the House, which is a rhyming book. My mom said

## it taught me how to read.

TYMIKA L. TILLMAN

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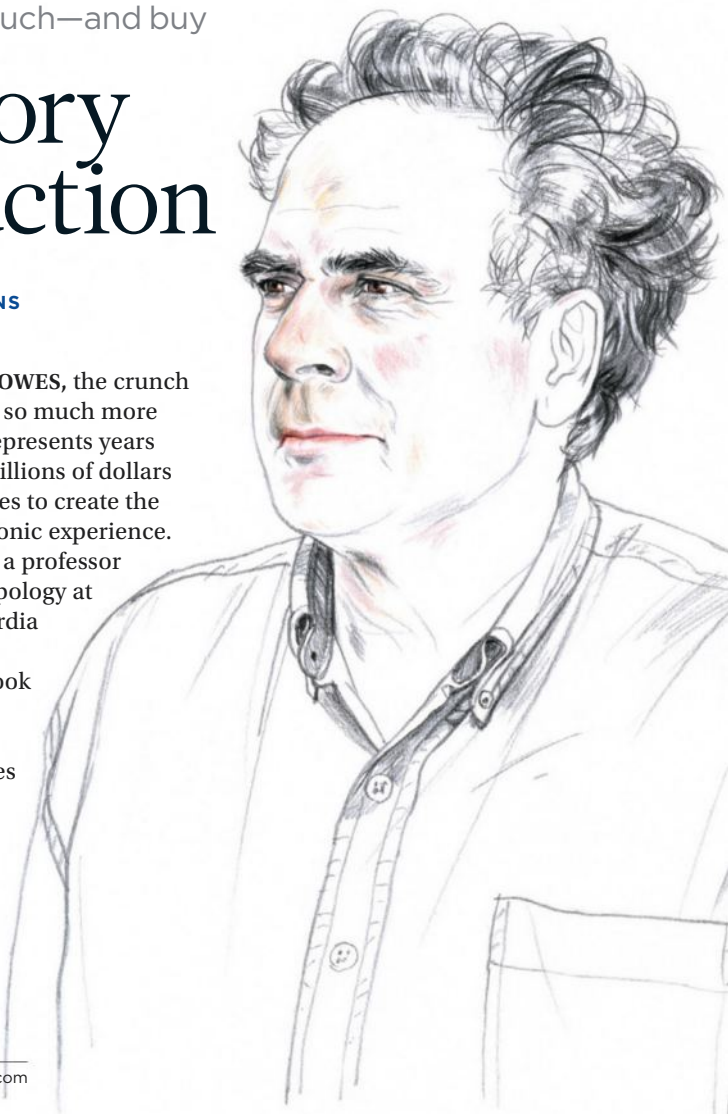


Now companies want you to see, smell, touch—and buy

# Sensory Seduction

BY ANDY SIMMONS

TO DAVID HOWES, the crunch of a potato chip is so much more than a sound. It represents years of research and millions of dollars spent by companies to create the most irresistible sonic experience. That, says Howes, a professor of sensory anthropology at Montreal's Concordia University and coauthor of the book *Way of Sensing*, is one example of how our five senses are being courted by corporations. "Sense appeal," he says, "is now used even more extensively than sex appeal to sell products."



### ***What do you do exactly?***

I study how the senses are employed in different cultures. Let me give you an example: In mainstream Western medicine, hospital food is bland, and anesthesia is important. The senses of taste, smell, and touch are downplayed, and medication is emphasized. The idea is that patients shouldn't feel anything. In Argentina, on the other hand, the senses are engaged, not sidelined, so you'll find sensory therapy and healing: massage (touch), herbs (smell), and special teas (taste).

### ***In your book, you talk about how companies are using multisensory marketing to sell products.***

A company wants to have not only the right look for its product but also the right sounds, smell, taste, and touch. Take Starbucks. It has a particular soundtrack that plays in its stores. The music is also available on a CD so you can take it home. Many venues, like casinos and sports arenas, have their own signature scents. The Westin Hotel uses a white tea scent. It's infused in all its toiletries and towels and diffused in the lobby. The idea is that whenever you smell it, you'll be reminded of the hours you spent in a Westin bed.

### ***Are scents really that indelible?***

Marketers think that using scents gives them a direct link to our brain because smell is such an ancient part of the sensorium. But in fact,

by all their appeals to smell, they're conditioning our [reactions to] smells. For example, we associate lemon scent with cleaning power. But what do lemons have to do with cleanliness? The connection began only in 1966 when Joy put a lemon scent into its detergent. Now it has become universal. I even found lemon-scented products in Papua New Guinea!

### ***You write that the crunch of potato chips and the slam of car doors are often manufactured so that now they are satisfying to us.***

It's extraordinary the kind of energy that's devoted to the crunch of snacks because crispness is understood to be a sign of freshness.

### ***So we're being swayed all the time without knowing it.***

In terms of quality, many products are similar. Aesthetics tip the scale. Fast-food restaurants use a lot of orange and yellow, which are stimulating colors. The hope is that you'll be on edge the whole time you're there, resulting in your eating quickly and then leaving so someone else can have that table. Some companies are even trademarking certain colors to set themselves off from competitors.

### ***How widespread is this?***

You'll find that the most effective and stimulating colors are being

withdrawn from common use. Cadbury was involved in a lawsuit with other candy manufacturers over having exclusive use of the color purple to advertise its chocolate. But by trademarking, companies are reducing the full range of sensations out there, limiting creativity as well as our own experiences.

***Is there any way for us to guard against being exploited?***

If we schooled our senses more, we wouldn't be so manipulated by advertisers. We'd also enjoy our senses more fully. Colleges offer many courses that involve seeing and listening, like classes in music or art history or appreciation. But there are no classes on taste, touch, or smell, so those senses are underdeveloped.

***Can we talk about how marketers are using touch?***

Once you've handled something, you're more likely to get attached to it, to want to possess it. An example is children's toys. Plastic packaging prevents us from using touch, so manufacturers cut holes in the packaging to let us feel the device. Dove soap was made with a curve that fit easily in the hand as opposed to the old square bars. The first

contoured glass Coca-Cola bottle was a wonderful design—it snuggled in the palm. The shape made a huge difference to sales because customers could feel the brand and not just see the logo or taste the drink. The big area now is cell phones and how they feel in your hand. I don't think companies have found the best, most comfortable design yet.

***But why bother with multisensory marketing? Isn't it enough for companies to tout a product's features, like "Kleenex feels soft on your nose," and have people decide on the basis of that message?***

Not anymore. Initially, everything was directed toward the visual—billboards, magazines, newspapers, etc.—and our ads suffered from an overload of the visual. Then the auditory came along, in the form of radio, jingles, and Muzak—and that became overloaded as well. The question became, How do you catch the consumer's attention? You appeal to another of the senses—say, with smell or a distinctive feel—until you outdo your rivals. So what is the sixth sense? Nobody knows. But if you can figure it out, patent it, because that will be the next thing.



**Truly hands-on:** The iconic curvy glass Coke bottle was appealing to the touch.



# FACES OF AMERICA

BY GLENN GLASSER



## Wolfgang Landers

*Civil War reenactor*

**DUBLIN, VIRGINIA**

“What I respect most about the soldiers who fought the American Civil War is their bravery. Think about it: You were told to march across an open field and open fire, and if you ran, you were shot. You had to be pretty brave to do that.”



# Points to Ponder

---

**THE THING YOU NEVER** understand about being a mother, until you are one, is that it is not the grown man you see before you, with his parking tickets, unpolished shoes, and complicated love life. You see all the people he has ever been rolled into one.

**JOJO MOYES,**  
*novelist*, in her book *Me Before You*

**MY GRANDMOTHER ONCE SAID** to me that in many ways [World War II] was the happiest time of her life because the whole community worked together. There was so much stress. It was only about, How do we survive today, and how can I help you get through this?


**JIMMY NELSON,**  
*photographer*, in *Psychology Today*

**NOT EVERYTHING IS RATIONAL**, and not everything can be explained. If you don't allow some room for something poetic, for something magic, for something surprising, without the need to explain it away, you do a great disservice to your heart.

**MARC MARON,**  
*comedian*, on his podcast *WTF with Marc Maron*


**WE LOSE EIGHT CHILDREN** and teenagers to gun violence every day. If a mysterious virus suddenly started killing eight of our children every day, America would mobilize teams of doctors and public health officials. But not with gun violence.

**ELIZABETH WARREN,**  
*U.S. senator*, in her book *A Fighting Chance*



There is no breathing human being on this planet [who] did not benefit by a woman saying yes twice: yes to make you, and yes to have you.

**PHARRELL WILLIAMS,**  
*musician*, in *GG*

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Taste—as in personal preference or discernment—is subjective. It’s ephemeral, shaped by trends and fads. It’s one part mouth and nose, two parts ego.

**MARY ROACH,**  
*science writer*, in her book *Gulp*

**COMEDY RELIEVES YOU.** A lot of times, we think we’re the only people bothered by certain things. Then you hear a comic say, “Don’t you hate it when ...” And it’s “Oh, my God! Of course!”

**FRED WILLARD,**  
*actor*, in *Esquire*

**IF MUSIC IS THE LANGUAGE** of the world, then just imagine how beautiful a seven-billion-part harmony would be.

**SCOTT HOYING,**  
*musician*, on Twitter

**WITH THE BEST ART,** everything you thought you knew comes into question—even who you are—and we need to remember that this is a good thing.

**NANCY SPECTOR,**  
*deputy director at the Guggenheim Museum*, in *Time*

**TAKE WHAT YOU LOVE** and make it the way you live your life, and that way, you bring love into the world.

**BILL MURRAY,**  
*actor*, on reddit.com

We’ve learned more in the past 15 years than in all of human history. We can take somebody who is totally paralyzed, put a chip in [his] brain, and have that person control a laptop.

**MICHIO KAKU,**  
*physicist*, on NPR’s *All Things Considered*



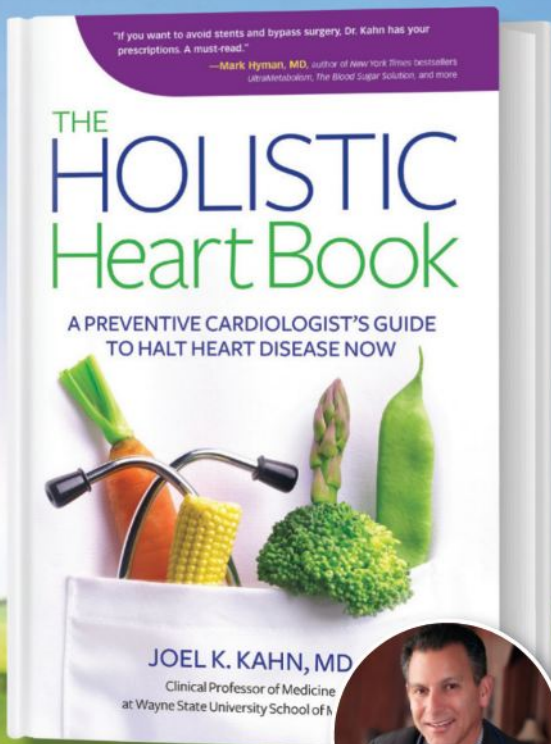
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# ART *of* LIVING

To find the best solution hiding in plain sight, try *Freakonomics* coauthor Stephen Dubner's method

## Freaky Thinkers Finish First

BY SUZANNE CLUCKEY FROM ATM MARKETPLACE



PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
CLAIRE BENOIST



“I WISH THAT I had magic answers and silver bullets where I could march into any group and say, ‘Here are the five things you need to do, and everything will be better,’” Stephen Dubner said during a recent speech I attended. Instead, he shared a few stories that had taught him and his coauthor, economist Steven Levitt, a different way to look at the world.

What Dubner learned was to *Think like a Freak* (the title of the duo’s new book, out this May), which means to observe, define, and recontextualize the elements of a problem. Then abandon all assumptions except the one that says “There must be a reason why” and reject all rejoinders except the one that says “I don’t know, but I’ll find out.”

### Don’t Ask for Attention. Grab It!

To demonstrate his point, Dubner told a story about hand sanitation in hospitals. Ask a roomful of people whether they wash their hands after visiting a restroom, and a great number will lie. Why? “People produce an answer that they think you want them to give,” Dubner said, one reason that “self-reporting data can be very misleading.” For instance, in an Australian hospital, 73 percent of staff doctors claimed that they soaped up before interacting with patients. But a study based on observed behavior showed that only 9 percent of them did.

To improve the rate, hospital administrators at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles tried everything from a strongly worded memo (which had zero effect) to an incentive of Starbucks gift cards (which the doctors loved, though it did not increase the hand-washing rate). Then a hospital epidemiologist came up with a perfectly absurd idea. At a lunch meeting, she had each administrator—the very people who were telling others how to behave—place one hand in a petri dish. She sent the handprinted dishes to the lab, where analysis turned up a who’s who of super-nefarious bacteria. An IT guy at the hospital got the idea to take a photo of those bacteria-laden samples to use as screen savers on



computers all over the hospital. "Literally overnight, the hand-hygiene rate shot up to about 100 percent," Dubner said. It worked so well, other hospitals started asking for the picture.

The moral of the story: "Human behavior is much harder to change than we think," he said. To alter people's habits, you almost always have to shift something in their environment as well.

## Reimagine the Simplest Acts

Another freaky thinker, according to Dubner: Takeru Kobayashi, the champion of Nathan's 2001 hot dog eating contest in Brooklyn. Kobayashi deconstructed the whole process of eating a hot dog into elements of efficient consumption. His method went something like this: Separate the hot dog from the bun; break the hot dog in half so it can be swallowed more quickly. Soak the bun in warm water and turn it into a ball, which will help the bun go down faster. Jump up and down while you eat.

By breaking down the act of eating and recontextualizing it as a competition rather than an everyday act, Kobayashi doubled the contest's previous record, eating 50 hot dogs

in 12 minutes. The key to his success was understanding the nature of the project and calibrating his goal, not to past performance but to desired results. Twenty-six hot dogs would've gotten Kobayashi the record—50 got him worldwide recognition.

## If It's Legal, Try It!

Dubner said that Kobayashi's approach to speed-eating also works in

other areas of your life.

That is, break down a problem into its most basic elements and explore each one from every angle, no matter how outlandish that angle might seem. Unfortunately, many people and businesses mistakenly approach situations in a linear way, trying one idea for six months to see if it works and, if

it doesn't, trying the next idea for another six months. "Experimentation would be to take 100 people and give them all six hours to come up with their best idea. Take those 100 ideas, throw out the 90 worst, and then take the ten that look viable, affordable, and legal, and put them all into play in some form at the same time in a random setting," Dubner said. Then you might have something special. **R**

“  
*To alter people's habits, you almost always have to shift something in their environment as well.*”



# Festivals Worth The Pit Stop

BY PERRI O. BLUMBERG

## Hatch Chile Festival

August 30 and 31

Don't say we didn't warn you: Handle the heat in dishes like the Green Chile Cheeseburger, Green Chile Ice Cream, and Chile Colorado con Carne (a red chile and pork stew) with more than 10,000 fellow chile fanatics. Those looking to cool off can head to the beer garden at this yearly celebration in Hatch, New Mexico, honoring the town's chile farmers. Also not to miss: mud volleyball, a mariachi competition, and the 43rd annual crowning of the Chile Queen.

## Gilroy Garlic Festival

July 25 to 27

Nobody worries about smelly breath at this 100,000 attendee-strong food fair honoring the pungent bulb, 30 miles south of San Jose, California. Garlic kettle corn? Check. French-fried garlic artichoke hearts? Check.

Daring palates can also dive into hits like garlic frog legs, garlic chocolate, and garlic ice cream. Be sure to venture into Gourmet Alley, a huge outdoor kitchen, where Pyro Chefs put all flames on deck in a spectacular, fiery show that involves tossing garlic-laced calamari and scampi in massive iron skillets. P.S. Don't forget the travel-size bottle of mouthwash!



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLAIRE BENOIST  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOEL HOLLAND



## R.C. & MoonPie Festival

**June 21**

From the watermelon seed-spitting contests to clog dancing, brace yourself for head-to-toe fun at the 20th annual event honoring R.C. Cola and MoonPies in Bell Buckle, Tennessee. Join the wacky ten-mile run that ends with participants indulging in the celebration's namesake treats, or take it easy on your feet and enjoy a simple MoonPie toss. Fun fact: Festival organizers load up a whopping two semitrucks with the pillowy marshmallow sandwiches for the day's fun.

## Blues, Brews & BBQ Festival

**July 11 to 13**

Pitmasters from local barbecue joints spoil attendees with the best of Louisville, Kentucky's finger-lickin'-good grub. Expect staples such as chicken, ribs, pulled pork, beef brisket, and roasted corn, along with traditional fairground eats like corn dogs and ice cream. When you're not inhaling thrills from the grill, kick back to the sounds from live blues musicians (lawn chairs and blankets welcome).

## Vermont Cheesemakers Festival

**July 20**

Wander around idyllic, 1,400-acre Shelburne Farms to sample from the mother of all cheese plates: more than 100 cheeses from 40 local creameries. Between mouthfuls, cleanse your palate with local beer, wine, and artisanal foods. With no shortage of demos and workshops like "cooking with chocolate and cheese" or "beyond the curd," there's little doubt that you'll have mounds of fun.

## Kennebunkport Festival

**June 1 to 8**

Bring your own lobster bib: This cozy seaside village in Maine offers up events ranging from intimate dinner parties (hosted by acclaimed chefs in magnificent mansions with stunning views) to a tented tapas party with food from around the world. While that's all digesting, take a stroll riverside for the art show with live music. If you're lucky, it'll help make room for Academe restaurant's famous Lobster Pot Pie, a dish so beloved that DIY kits are now shipped nationwide.



# Clever Uses For Leftover Wine

■ Pour a red variety into a jar of non-pasteurized vinegar and leave it alone, stirring weekly. Within a couple of weeks, you'll have "artisanal" vinegar.

■ Flavor-boost soups and stews: White and sparkling work best in creamy or clear and brothy soups (think chowder and simple vegetable), while red wine goes well with tomato or beef-based varieties (think chili). Add a few generous splashes per portion.

■ Poach pears, apples, peaches, or plums in red wine and sugar. Let simmer in the liquid for ten minutes.

■ Fruit flies? An open bottle with even the smallest bit of wine left can serve as a flytrap. Flies will gravitate toward the bottle instead of your fruit bowl and will be unable to escape.

■ Add any sparkling white wine like champagne, prosecco, or cava to omelets for an amazingly fluffy dish.



While you're beating the eggs, pour in approximately one tablespoon of bubbly for every two eggs.

■ Freeze in ice cube trays (eight cubes = one cup) to add flavor to sauces and stews.

■ To make classic steamed mussels, combine leftover white wine (a little less than half a cup per pound of mussels) with butter and garlic.

■ If your only leftover is, ahem, the bottle: Use the empty vessel as a fuss-free and beautiful flower vase. **R**

Sources: Estancia Wines, *Cooking Light*, drinkaware.co.uk, *Bon Appétit*, phickle.com



# Can a protein originally derived from a jellyfish improve your memory? Scientists say, “Yes”!

Advertisement

## Can a simple protein hold the key to improving your memory?

Researchers have discovered a protein that actually supports healthy brain function.\*

For many years, researchers have known that the human brain loses cells throughout our lives, part of the natural process of aging. In fact, we lose about 85,000 brain cells per day, that is one per second, over 31 million brain cells every year! This impacts every aspect of your life...how you think and how you feel.

Recently, scientists made a significant breakthrough in brain health with the discovery that apoaeguorin can support healthy brain function, help you have a sharper mind and think clearer.\*

## Supports Healthy Brain Function\*

Apoaequorin is in the same family of proteins as those found in humans, but it was originally discovered in one of nature's simplest organisms — the jellyfish.

## Supports a Sharper Mind\*

Now produced in a scientific process, researchers formulated this vital protein into a product called Prevagen®. Prevagen is clinically shown to help with mild memory problems associated with aging.\*

## Improves Memory\*

This type of protein is vital and found naturally in the human brain and nervous system. As we age we can't make enough of them to keep up with the brain's demands. Prevagen supplements these proteins during the natural process of aging to keep your brain healthy. Prevagen comes in an easy to swallow capsule. It has no significant side effects and will not interact with your current medication.

## Supports Clearer Thinking\*

Just how well does Prevagen work? In a computer assessed, double-blinded, placebo controlled study, Prevagen improved memory for most subjects within 90 days.\*

## Try Prevagen® for yourself and feel the difference.

Available at:



Call toll-free 877-981-4321  
to learn more.



\*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration.  
This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

# A Quirky Tour of The U.S.A.

BY ALISON CAPORIMO

## 1 SEE FOUR STATES AT ONCE

For an unlikely selfie, visit the Four Corners Monument, the only point in the United States where four states converge. Some 250,000 visitors travel annually to the bronze disk landmark near Teec Nos Pos, Arizona, which is surrounded by seals and flags that honor the spot where Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah meet.

## 2 ENJOY THE WORLD'S LARGEST STAMP BALL

Weighing in at 600 pounds and measuring 32 inches in diameter, this massive ball of stamps (and spit) is the work of the Boys Town Stamp Collecting Club. Currently on display at the Leon Myers Stamp Center in Boys Town, Nebraska, the ball was constructed in the 1950s and is composed of approximately 4,655,000 postage stamps.



## 3 VISIT AMERICA'S STONEHENGE

The origins of this man-made Salem, New Hampshire, rock maze—considered the oldest in North America—are as mysterious as its design, which dates back some 4,000 years. Like Stonehenge in England, America's Stonehenge is an accurate astronomical calendar that can still be used to determine annual solar and lunar events.

## 4 WALK THE MASON-DIXON LINE

While the battle between the North and South is long over, the iconic Civil War demarcation survives. In 1763, acclaimed English surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon were hired to solve a property-line feud





between two families. The men set stone markers every mile to form the longest linear survey ever attempted by mankind, using the stars to chart their path. Some 250 years later, their work remains along borders separating Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

**5 SAIL THE LOST SEA**  
America's largest underground lake is tucked away beneath Tennessee, according to the Guinness Book

of World Records. After you tour the caves 140 feet below-ground, hop into a glass-bottom boat to float across the Lost Sea and spot large collections of wild-looking cave formations and 20,000-year-old jaguar tracks.

**6 JOURNEY AS FAR SOUTH AS YOU CAN**

Roughly one million visitors a year travel to a painted concrete buoy erected in 1983 at the corner of South and Whitehead streets in Key West, Florida. The reason: It marks the southernmost point of the continental United States. Snap a photo and then soak in the stunning ocean view that's just 90 miles from Cuba.



Sources: American Profile, Travel and Leisure, Time, Parents

# Vacation Trends Worth Trying

BY ALISON CAPORIMO

## Ride a Bike

Cycling-based tour operators are reporting a 25 to 30 percent increase in demand this year, thanks to travelers' desires to stay active and eco-friendly on their getaways. Biking vacations from companies like Backroads and DuVine offer tourists the opportunity to explore such destinations as the Arizona desert and the French countryside at their own pace.

## Take All the Generations


Cruise lines specialize in multigenerational travel, providing services that appeal to both six- and 66-year-olds. Climb aboard Princess Cruises and watch a poolside movie on a 300-square-foot screen while the kids practice their downward-dog poses in a youth-focused yoga program.

## Track Your Genealogy

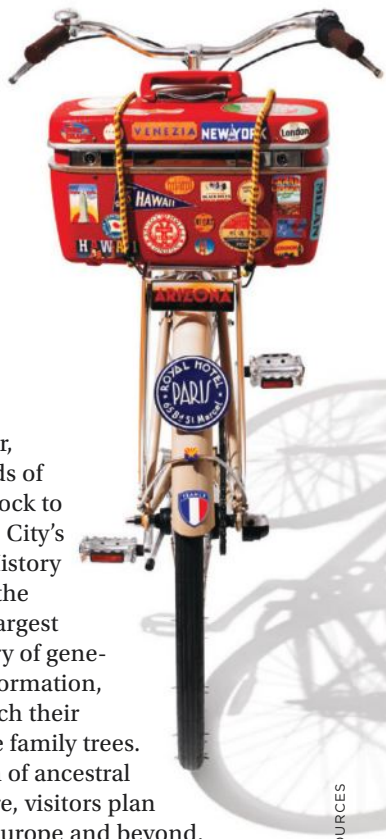
Relax and find your roots with genealogy tourism: a trip with a twist of uncovering your personal past.

Each year, thousands of people flock to Salt Lake City's Family History Library, the world's largest repository of genealogy information, to research their extensive family trees. In search of ancestral adventure, visitors plan trips to Europe and beyond.

## Step Inside Your Favorite Story

Now you can follow in the footsteps of your favorite on-screen characters. Many *Downton Abbey* and *Game of Thrones* travel packages were launched last year, while searches for hotels in Las Vegas rose by 159 percent following the release of *The Hangover III*, according to hotels.com. 

Sources: BBC Travel, pitchengine.com, Travel Market Report, *Bicycling, Travel and Leisure*, Travel Channel, MSN Travel



PROP STYLIST: SARAH GUIDO FOR HALLEY RESOURCES

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With a smartphone in hand ...

# Get Medical Advice— Anywhere, Anytime

BY DAMON BERES

**YOU'RE SICK**, you're sniffing, and you're wondering if you need to upend your life to get to the doctor. You may not need to, thanks to new “telemedicine” apps that aim to revolutionize medical care. Now a doctor can use an app to scope out your sniffles via video chat, prescribe medicine, and track symptoms from afar. It's fast, easy, and reliable, which means you can spend more time on rest and chicken soup. (Of course, for anything that needs much more than that, you should still talk to a doc in person.)

Remote-care apps allow you to contact a doctor and bolster a relationship, whether you're a caregiver in the suburbs or a busy patient in a city. Here's how the latest apps may change your health-care future.



## **YOU WANT: To Talk to a Doc Right Now**

### **TRY: Doctor on Demand**

It's 2:45 in the morning. You wake up because your four-year-old is coughing—hard—and her forehead is burning up. You're exhausted and worried, and you're not sure whether to wait and see if she gets better or to head to the emergency room pronto.

Thankfully, you don't have to decide. Use the Doctor on Demand app ([doctorondemand.com](http://doctorondemand.com)), and you can get an educated opinion from a board-certified MD. The app offers 24-7 access to U.S.-licensed physicians specializing in internal medicine, pediatrics, gynecology, and more. When you open the app, you'll enter symptoms and any allergies, plus any medication you (or your child) are currently taking. Then you'll video chat with a doctor in your area for a \$40 fee. The doc can talk you through symptoms, prescribe meds, and refer you to a local specialist—or the ER—if she decides it's necessary.

## **YOU WANT: To Text Your Doc About a Chronic Condition**

### **TRY: Pingmd**

Your tan is fading, so you're wondering about that dark splotch remaining on your chest. Or your pain is better after a new medication you started, but now you're wondering if that stomachache is a side effect. Don't you wish you could have a chat with your doc without visiting the office?

Enter Pingmd ([pingmd.com](http://pingmd.com)). The app allows patients to shoot concerns to their own doctors via text, video, or picture whenever they want. Doctors then respond directly or pass the message along to a colleague or someone else in their network. Every “ping” is saved in your medical record for future reference. That means your doctor can keep an eye on your condition and let you know if you need to come in for a visit. The service is free for patients—but if your doctor isn't one of the nearly 10,000 using the service, you're out of luck for now.

## **YOU WANT: Answers to Some Confounding Questions**

### **TRY: HealthTap**

We live in an era of information overload, so online searches on topics like anxiety and specialized diet plans are liable to return conflicting, or even dubious, results. For the lowdown, you talked to your doctor, but now you want more details or a second opinion. Where do you turn?

Consult HealthTap ([healthtap.com](http://healthtap.com)). It connects you to more than 50,000 doctors and dentists from across the country for peer-checked answers to medical questions. You can search for topics of interest—everything from ADHD to wilderness medicine—and ask a question of your own. Doctors will respond and review each other's answers for accuracy, so you can get a variety of opinions and look for a consensus. **R**



Extraordinary Uses for Ordinary Things

# Summer Stuff!



## ■ BLEACH SANITIZES POOL TOYS

Dip a sponge into a mixture of two cups of bleach and one gallon of water, then wipe down pool noodles and beach balls. Scrub off grime with a brush, and rinse with water.

## ■ VINEGAR BRIGHTENS

### PATIO FURNITURE

Fill a spray bottle with white vinegar, and spritz over chairs and tables to remove mildew stains and prevent mold from forming.

## ■ COFFEE GROUNDS BANISH ANTS

Sprinkle some grounds near doorways. Coffee's high nitrogen content burns bugs, so they won't walk across it and into your home.


## ■ FLIP-FLOPS BECOME DOORSTOPS

Cut a wedge of rubber from an old thong and use it to prop open a door and let the summer breeze in.

## ■ DRYER SHEETS REPEL BUGS

Keep sheets of this laundry staple in a cup outdoors—they mask the human scent that attracts mosquitoes.

## ■ FOIL CLEANS THE GRILL

While the coals are still red-hot, lay a sheet of aluminum foil over the grates and close the grill's lid. The next time you grill, crumple up the foil and use it to scrub off the burned residue before you start cooking. 

Sources: The *Huffington Post*, commonsensewithmoney.com, thesecretuniverse.com, *Extraordinary Uses for Ordinary Things*, *Examiner*, *tlc.howstuffworks.com*

Three ways string lights add sparkle to your outdoor space

# Backyard Mood Lighting

BY ALISON CAPORIMO

**Wrap** Using one strand per tree, loop lights around trunks, leaving three inches between each row for a magical glow. Choose LED bulbs; most bugs are hardwired with UV receptors, so LED rays are less appealing to them, says designhunterla.com creator Veronica Valencia.

**Zigzag** Attach lights to tall structures in your yard to illuminate an outdoor dinner. Camilla Fabbri,

creator of Family Chic (cfabbridesigns.com), keeps cords from sagging or getting tangled by securing them to the tops of outdoor umbrellas or fence posts with plastic twist ties.

**Drape** Hang lights over boughs for a romantic display that takes merely minutes to set up. Make sure the bottommost bulb is at least a foot above the ground to avoid water and prevent safety hazards, says styleme pretty.com founder Abby Larson. 

ALL IN

# A Day's Work



*“You know, there may be a way to move that bizarre invention around without having to carry it.”*

**ONE OF THE JOYS** of working is the opportunity to expense stuff you need. But did employees go too far with these items?

- Lottery tickets
- Pet food
- A tepee
- Hot tub supplies
- A fine for crashing into a tollbooth

Source: Robert Half Management Resources

**A CUSTOMER** walked up to my bank window and asked me to cash a check.

“Of course,” I said. “But I’ll need to see ID.”

She dug through her purse and handed me a snapshot.

“That’s me in the middle,” she said.

**DEBORAH BERKLEY, Yakima, Washington**

**BITTER? NO!** Not the people who posted this sign at a bookstore that was going out of business: “Sorry, no public restroom. Try amazon.com.”

Source: *Consumer Reports*

### SIX DUMB QUESTIONS REAL LAWYERS HAVE ASKED IN COURT:

- “How many times have you committed suicide?”
- “Were you alone or by yourself?”
- “Was it you or your brother who was killed?”
- “Without saying anything, tell the jury what you did next.”
- “Was that the same nose you broke as a child?”
- “Now, doctor, isn’t it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn’t know about it until the next morning?”

From *The Dumb Book* (Reader’s Digest Books)

**ONE OF MY** insurance customers faxed over the police report from an auto accident. Several weeks later, she called asking for information from that report. “Didn’t you keep the original copy?” I asked.

“No,” she said. “I faxed it to you.”

**SHERRI SMITH**, Carrollton, Texas

**FACULTY AT OUR UNIVERSITY** had to file an explanation when they gave a grade of Incomplete. One semester, a professor’s report read “Student #1 contracted mononucleosis. Student #2 contracted pregnancy.”

**BILL SPENCER**, Cullowhee, North Carolina

**MY HUSBAND** was driving home from work when he was pulled over for not wearing a seat belt. Two days later—same ticket, same cop.

“So,” the officer said, “have you learned anything?”

“Yes, I have,” said my husband. “I’ve learned I need to take a different way home from work.”

**KIMBERLY OWEN**, Paoli, Indiana

**MY FAVORITE PART** of the conference call was the first 20 minutes of “Who just joined?”

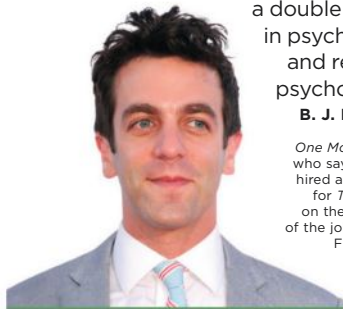
From *meetingboy.com*



### PSYCHED OUT

“I spent four years in college. I didn’t learn a thing. It was really my own fault. I had a double major in psychology and reverse psychology.”

**B. J. NOVAK**, author of *One More Thing*, who says he was hired as a writer for *The Office* on the strength of the joke above. From *Time*



On your lunch hour, send us something funny that happened at work. It could be worth \$\$\$\$. See page 9 or [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).

Our final days are not like theirs. But they should be.

# How Doctors Die

BY KEN MURRAY, MD FROM ZOCALOPUBLICSSQUARE.ORG

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, Charlie, a highly respected orthopedist and a mentor of mine, found a lump in his stomach. The diagnosis was pancreatic cancer. His surgeon was one of the best: He had even invented a new procedure for this exact cancer that could triple the five-year-survival odds—from 5 percent to 15 percent—albeit with a poor quality of life.

Charlie was uninterested. He focused on spending time with family. He got no chemotherapy, radiation, or surgical treatment. Medicare didn't spend much on him. Several months later, he died at home.

Doctors die, of course—but not like the rest of us. What's unusual is not how much treatment they get compared with most Americans but how little. They have seen what is going to happen, and they generally have access to any medical care they could want. But doctors prefer to go gently.

They know enough about death to understand what all people fear

most: dying in pain and dying alone. They've talked about this with their families. They want to be sure, when the time comes, that no heroic measures will happen. They know modern medicine's limits. Almost all medical professionals have seen "futile care" performed. That's when doctors bring the cutting edge of technology to bear on a grievously ill person near the end of life. The patient will get cut open, perforated with tubes, hooked up to machines, and assaulted with drugs.

All of this occurs in the intensive care unit at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars a day. It buys misery we would not inflict on a terrorist. I cannot count the number of times fellow physicians have told me, in words that vary only slightly, "Promise me if you find me like this that you'll kill me." Some medical personnel wear medallions stamped NO CODE to tell physicians not to perform CPR on them.





## The Drawbacks of “Do Everything”

How has it come to this—that doctors administer care that they wouldn’t want for themselves? The simple, or not-so-simple, answer: patients, doctors, and the system.

Imagine that someone has lost consciousness and been admitted to an emergency room. When doctors ask family members—shocked,

scared, and overwhelmed—if they want “everything” to be done, they answer yes. But often they just mean “everything that’s reasonable.” They may not know what’s reasonable, nor, in their confusion and sorrow, will they ask or hear what a physician may be telling them. For their part, doctors told to do “everything” will do it, whether reasonable or not.

People also have unrealistic expect-

tations of what doctors can accomplish. Many think of CPR as a reliable lifesaver, when the results are usually poor. I've seen hundreds of people in the emergency room after they got CPR. Just one, a healthy man with no heart troubles, walked out of the hospital. Even though only a small percentage of healthy people will have a good response to CPR, we would always do it to give them that chance. But with terminal people, virtually no one responds. If a patient has severe illness, old age, or a terminal disease, the odds of a good outcome from CPR are infinitesimal and the odds of suffering are overwhelming (see sidebar).

Physicians enable too. Even those who hate to administer futile care must address the wishes of patients and families. Imagine an emergency room with grieving, possibly hysterical, family members. Establishing trust under such circumstances is delicate. People may think a doctor is trying to save time, money, or effort—rather than attempting to relieve suffering—if he advises against further treatment.

Even when the right preparations have been made, the system can still swallow people. One of my patients was a 78-year-old named Jack; he had been ill for years and had undergone about 15 major surgeries. He explained to me that he never, under any circumstances, wanted to be placed on life support. One Saturday, Jack suffered a massive stroke and

was admitted to the emergency room unconscious. Doctors did everything possible to resuscitate him, and they put him on life support. This was Jack's worst nightmare. When I arrived and took over his care, I spoke to his wife and to hospital staff, bringing in my office notes with his preferences. Then I turned off the life-support machines and sat with him. He died two hours later.

Even with all his wishes documented, Jack hadn't died as he'd hoped; the system had intervened. A nurse, I later found out, even reported my unplugging of Jack to the authorities as a possible homicide. Nothing came of it; Jack's wishes had been spelled out explicitly, and he'd left the paperwork to prove it. But the prospect of a police investigation is terrifying. I could far more easily have left Jack on life support against his wishes, prolonging his suffering. I would even have made a little more money, and Medicare could have ended up with an additional \$500,000 bill.

## Choosing Quality of Life

Doctors don't overtreat themselves. Almost anyone can die in peace at home. Pain can be managed better than ever. Hospice care, which focuses on providing terminally ill patients with comfort and dignity, offers most people better final days. Studies have found that people in hospice often live longer than

people with the same disease who seek active cures.

Several years ago, my older cousin Torch (born at home by the light of a flashlight—or torch) had a seizure that turned out to be the result of lung cancer that had spread to his brain. With aggressive treatment, including three to five hospital visits a week for chemotherapy, he would live perhaps four months. Torch decided against treatment and simply took pills for brain swelling. He moved in with me.

We spent the next eight months having fun like we hadn't had in decades. We went to Disneyland, his first time. Torch was a sports nut, and he was very happy to watch

sports and eat my cooking. He had no serious pain and remained high-spirited. One day, he didn't wake up; he spent the next three days in a coma-like sleep, then died.

Torch was no doctor, but he wanted a life of quality, not just quantity. If there is a state of the art of end-of-life care, it is this: death with dignity. As for me, my physician has my choices. There will be no heroics; I hope to go gentle into that good night. Like my mentor Charlie. Like my cousin Torch. Like my fellow doctors. **R**

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Ken Murray, MD, is a retired clinical assistant professor of family medicine at the University of Southern California.

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## WHAT DOCS DO DIFFERENTLY

■ **THEY SPELL OUT THEIR WISHES** Sixty-four percent of doctors have created advanced directives (legal documents spelling out what end-of-life care they'd like), according to Johns Hopkins research. Perhaps one third of the general public has done this.

■ **THEY KNOW THE TRUTH ...** While television portrays CPR as successful in about 75 percent of cases, real-life results are dismal. Of 95,000 patients studied, only 8 percent survived more than one month after they received CPR, according to Japanese research. Of that group, only about 3 percent could lead a mostly normal life.

■ **... SO THEY DON'T CHOOSE CPR** About 90 percent of Johns Hopkins doctors said they wouldn't want CPR if they were in a chronic coma, compared with about 25 percent of the general public.

**KEN MURRAY, MD**, from the Health Care Blog

# With Medication, Timing May Be Everything

BY NISSA SIMON ADAPTED FROM AARP BULLETIN

THE INSTRUCTIONS on the pill bottle may simply say “once a day.” But because of your circadian rhythm—the biological clock that governs sleep, hormone production, and other processes—your body doesn’t respond to medications in the same way at different times of the day.

“Some drugs are not as effective or as well tolerated if they’re taken at the wrong biological time,” says Michael Smolensky, adjunct professor of biomedical engineering at the University of Texas at Austin. “It’s not that they’re not effective at all, but they’re certainly much less effective or tolerated.”

Now a cutting-edge field called drug chronotherapy advocates syncing your medication regimen with your circadian rhythm to maximize effectiveness and minimize side effects. Here are the best times to take meds based on chronotherapy and other factors. (Note: Never change your drug routine without first talking to your doctor or pharmacist.)

## Best in the Morning:

### ■ DEPRESSION MEDS

Disrupted sleep is a common side effect of some SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors), which is why experts often recommend that patients take them when they wake up.

### ■ OSTEOPOROSIS MEDS

Your body doesn’t easily absorb bisphosphonate drugs, such as Boniva and Fosamax. So doctors advise taking them on an empty stomach first thing in the morning with a glass of water, then waiting an hour before eating, drinking, or taking other drugs or supplements.

## Best Around Dinnertime:

### ■ HEARTBURN MEDS

The stomach produces two to three times more acid between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. than at any other time of day. If you’re on an acid-reducing H2 medication such as Pepcid or Zantac, take it 30 minutes before dinner. This controls stomach acid



during the overnight period, when secretion reaches its peak.

#### ■ ALLERGY MEDS

Hay fever typically worsens at night and feels most severe in the morning, when levels of symptom-triggering histamine are highest. Once-daily antihistamines, such as Claritin, reach their peak eight to 12 hours after you take them, so using them at dinner-time means better control of morning symptoms. (Take twice-a-day antihistamines in the morning and evening.)

### Best Before Bedtime:

#### ■ CHOLESTEROL MEDS

Cholesterol production in the liver

is highest after midnight and lowest during the morning and early afternoon, so statins are most effective when taken just before bedtime.

#### ■ BLOOD PRESSURE MEDS

Blood pressure is typically higher in the day and lower during sleep. But many people with high blood pressure don't exhibit this nighttime dip, especially as they get older. This is a risk factor for stroke, heart attack, and kidney disease. That's why experts advise taking certain blood pressure-lowering drugs at bedtime, to normalize daily blood pressure rhythm and decrease these risks. ACE inhibitors and ARBs are most effective when taken at this time.

### Timed to Symptoms:

#### ■ OSTEOARTHRITIS MEDS

According to French researchers, it's best to take NSAIDs, such as naproxen and ibuprofen—the most widely used meds for osteoarthritis—approximately six hours before pain is at its worst, so they'll kick in at the appropriate time. If you're prone to afternoon pain, take meds between mid-morning and noon; for evening pain, schedule them for mid-afternoon; and for nighttime pain, take them with your evening meal. **R**



# Surprising Reasons Your Belly's Bloated

BY LIZ VACCARIELLO

EVER FEEL STUFFED to the gills after a normal meal? Wake up feeling fine but have a belly that makes you look about six months pregnant by lunch? Welcome to the world of bloating—a symptom that affects 10 to 30 percent of people, sometimes me. After years of enduring bloating and abdominal pain, I began to readily identify certain triggers. I always felt puffy after a sodium-packed Mexican meal, for example. But as I researched the latest digestive-health studies for my recent book *21-Day Tummy*, I was shocked to learn that these unexpected factors can play a role too.

## Stomach Bug

About 25 percent of patients who get gastroenteritis, a stomach infection, have bloating even after the illness clears. A likely suspect: small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO). In SIBO patients, abnormal levels of

microbes colonize the small intestine, which can lead to gas and bloating, says Henry Lin, MD, chief of gastroenterology at the New Mexico VA Health Care System. Gastroenteritis can disrupt your defense mechanisms that normally keep bacteria out of the small intestine, leading to SIBO. It is typically diagnosed with a breath test and can be treated with antibiotics or other approaches.

## Watermelon Snack

Sweet, refreshing, thirst-quenching—and bloating? Watermelon, as well as certain other fruits like apples, pears, and mangoes, has a high ratio of fructose to glucose (both sugars that occur naturally in fruit). This can cause gas and bloating in the



estimated one in three people who has difficulty digesting fructose, according to my *21-Day Tummy* coauthor, Kate Scarlata, RD. If this is you, she recommends fruits with a more balanced fructose-to-glucose ratio, such as bananas and blueberries.

## Vacation

Almost 50 percent of people become constipated when they travel, says Connecticut gastroenterologist Ed Levine, MD. When the bacteria in your intestines produce air, it can get trapped in your digestive tract and cause bloating. Prevent it by sticking to your bedtime and mealtime routines as much as possible. Changes in your circadian rhythm throw off the hormones that help food and waste move through your gut.

## Skipping Exercise

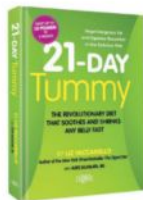
The last thing you may want to do on a “fat day” is lace up your sneakers and squeeze into workout clothes. But physical activity stimulates the muscles of your digestive tract, which helps move through your

GI tract the food and air bubbles that make you feel bloated. In one small German study, people who took a post-dinner stroll significantly sped up the time it took their body to digest their meal.

## Work Deadline

“When you experience fight-or-flight symptoms, like a racing heart, your body diverts blood flow away from your GI tract, which slows down digestion,” says Dr. Levine. Heavy breathing, which occurs when you’re under stress, makes you swallow more air than usual and can also lead to bloating. To feel better, simply change your breathing pattern so you exhale for a few counts longer than you inhale. This turns off the stress response and moves your body into a calmer state. **R**

*21-Day Tummy* (Reader’s Digest, \$25.99) is available wherever books are sold. The plan reveals breakthrough foods to slim your waist and soothe your digestion.



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\* \* \*

## A JOKESTER’S DICTIONARY

Consonants should be called cnsnnts.

@KENJENNINGS

It’s weird that *coward* doesn’t mean “toward a cow.”

@LANYARDIGAN

# World of Medicine

## Walk Briskly for Better Prostate Health

If diagnosed with prostate cancer, men who walk quickly fare better than those who walk slowly. University of California, San Francisco, scientists examined the blood vessels of prostate tumors in 572 men and analyzed data on their physical activity before their diagnosis. Patients who walked the fastest—between 3.3 and 4.5 miles per hour—had healthier-looking blood vessels, suggestive of less aggressive tumors, compared with the slowest walkers, who clocked in between 1.5 and 2.5 miles per hour.

## Slash Sugar for A Longer Life

Not-so-sweet news: People who got at least 25 percent of their calories from added sugar—mainly in sweetened drinks like soda, grain-based desserts like cookies, and fruit juice—were almost three times more likely to die of heart problems than those who consumed less than 10 percent of daily calories from sugar, according to a *JAMA Internal*

*Medicine* study of more than 11,000 people based on 18 years of data. Those who got more than 15 percent of calories from added sugar—the equivalent of about two cans of soda—were about 20 percent more likely to die of heart-related issues.

## Best and Worst Antibiotics For Swimmer's Ear

Nearly one third of doctors prescribe oral antibiotics to treat swimmer's ear, but new guidelines from the American Academy of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery instead recommend antibiotic eardrops for most cases. The drops can deliver up to 1,000 times more concentration of antibiotic

in the ear canal, making them more effective. Recent studies have shown that most routinely prescribed oral antibiotics don't kill even the most common culprit of swimmer's ear, a bacterium named *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

## Worrying Together Creates Calm

Venting about stress can make you feel better—but only if it's to someone who feels just as



anxious. Researchers from the University of Southern California tasked 52 women with giving a videotaped speech. Before speaking, the participants were paired up and urged to express their feelings. Researchers assessed the women's emotional states and measured levels of the stress hormone cortisol before, during, and after the speeches. When each woman in the pair had similar emotions, discussing their feelings made both less stressed. But when one felt nervous and the other felt calm, communicating did not minimize the worriers' anxiety.


## See Your Lab Reports Sooner

A new federal rule lets all U.S. patients directly access their lab test results—say, regular blood tests to monitor the effects of some common meds—without going through their physicians. The Department of Health and Human Services believes the change, which took effect this April and requires full compliance by October 6, will empower patients. (On average, one out of 14 potentially worrisome outpatient lab results is not conveyed to patients, according to Cornell research.) Depending on the lab, you may be able to call, write, fax, or visit a lab's website to learn your results. But you should still follow up with your doctor, who can help interpret results and determine whether additional testing or treatment is needed.

## Probiotics May Help Weight Loss

Women dieters who took a particular probiotic strain twice daily lost an average of nearly ten pounds after three months, while a similar group who instead took placebo pills shed almost six pounds, according to a new study in the *British Journal of Nutrition*. What's more, the probiotic takers continued to lose weight over the following three months, averaging a total loss of 11.5 pounds; the control group did not lose any more weight.

## Alternative Sleep Apnea Treatment

It's crucial to treat sleep apnea—a disorder marked by interrupted breathing and snoring during sleep—which raises the risk of heart disease. But roughly half of patients prescribed the standard therapy (continuous positive airway pressure, or CPAP, which is administered via a mask that keeps airways open) struggle with it. Now a new implant could help some patients who don't tolerate CPAP. Implanted surgically, the pacemaker-like device stimulates a nerve below the tongue that prevents obstruction of the airway. In a recent 12-month study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, it reduced breathing pauses and raised blood-oxygen levels in over two thirds of 124 patients. The FDA has approved the device. 



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16

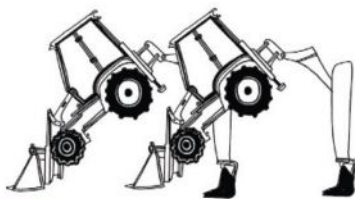
# 25 Brilliant, Quirky, That Could Only





and Uplifting Things  
Happen Here

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MILLER MOBLEY



## 1 ... do tractors square-dance

ROCHESTER, INDIANA

Swinging your partner round and round gets a tad unwieldy when you're both on four big wheels, but trust us—it's just as much fun. This Midwestern pastime dates back to the 1950s, when farm-equipment manufacturer International Harvester featured an ad with whirling tractors. Here's what they do: Drivers maneuver tractors to execute precision promenades, circles, and weaves, all set to rollicking square dance music and directed by a caller. Indiana's Lily Pearl tractor dancers, for instance, perform as a team of eight, but in the true spirit of competition, they're aiming to leave that feat in the dust. "We plan to dance with 16 tractors on the same field," says farmer Skeeter Daugherty, Lily Pearl's leader. "It's never been done before."

## 2 ... can cancer patients get help with housekeeping

DALLAS, TEXAS

Debbie Sardone (pictured on previous page), 55, remembers every second of the call. Eleven years ago,

she answered the phone at her house-cleaning service. The woman on the other end asked for a price. When Sardone gave her the quote, the woman responded, "I can't afford that now. I'm going through chemotherapy and radiation," and promptly hung up. Sardone, who didn't have caller ID, chastised herself: Why didn't I offer to clean for free? Later that day, she gathered her office staff and instructed them to perform services without charge for women with cancer.

Three years later, Sardone formed the national nonprofit Cleaning for a Reason, which now boasts 1,085 member businesses in all 50 states (and Canada); together, they've donated more than 15,000 house cleanings. One partner describes the work as "vitamins for the soul." "I never knew how good it would feel to give away for free what I do for a living," says Sardone.





### 3 ... is a scientist also an artist of the night sky

CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

Professor Tyler Nordgren's love affair with the evening sky began when he was a Boy Scout on camping trips in Oregon and Alaska. "Once we were on a lake at night, and I saw millions of stars above me. That has stayed with me my whole life," he says. Nordgren, 44, who teaches physics and astronomy at the University of Redlands in California, has gone to 12 national parks to photograph the sky at twilight and after dark. His mission is to raise awareness of the beauty of their night skies (many people visit only during the daytime) and the threat that light pollution poses. California's Lassen Volcanic Natural Park is shown above, and Maine's Acadia National Park and Utah's Bryce Canyon National Park are two other favorites of Nordgren's. "When you look up and see a billion stars, you know that you're part of a larger universe," he says.

COURTESY TYLER NORDGREN

## 4 ... do you find trees older than the pyramids

INYO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

If America's longest-living residents could talk, they'd probably just grumble about the weather. In eastern California's White Mountains, bristlecone pine trees have survived for millennia, despite the region's scarce rainfall, bruising winds, and frequent freezes. In 2012, scientists dated one of the trees at 5,063 years old, making it the world's longest-living organism. The pines' wood hardens against the elements, guarding them from rot and forming sculptural swirls. They grow as little as an inch in diameter every 100 years, but fortunately, these pines have centuries to spare.



its plucky sound instantly dispels gloom. The craze has been stoked by a new group of young Hawaiian virtuosos, like Jake Shimabukuro and Taimane Gardner, as well as amateurs on YouTube, like Nicole Tan (pictured on page 70), 19, a

Bowdoin College student who posts covers of hit songs like Nicki Minaj's "Superbass." "I went to the Internet, searched 'how to play ukulele,' and a video came up," she says. "Five minutes later, I could play it."

## 5 ... are ukuleles even hotter than electric guitars

HONOLULU, HAWAII

What's one pound, around 130 years old, native to the United States, and so popular, it's nearly doubled in sales from 2010 to 2012? It's the ukulele, now enjoying its biggest comeback since Bali Hai. And why not? The Hawaiian-born instrument is cheap and easy to master, and



## 6 ... do survivors pay it forward

SANDY HOOK, CONNECTICUT

Four months after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, a tornado tore through Oklahoma and caught the attention of four friends from the Newtown area. When John DiCostanzo, 34 (in blue polo shirt), heard the news of the devastation, he and (from left) Peter Baressi, Bill Faucett, and Howard Wood resolved to travel 1,500 miles to Moore with supplies. "We had an immense amount of love pour into our town in December, and it continues to show up," Baressi said to the *Newtown Bee*. "We needed to share it." On May 22, the men set off on their drive with 13,000 pounds of goods. They weathered a tire blowout and broken brake line before reaching Oklahoma 40 hours later.

FIRST SPREAD: PROP STYLIST: SARA FOLDENAUER; FOR KATE RYAN: WARDROBE STYLIST: MARIE BLOMQUIST; FOR AUBRI BALK: HAIR: JONATHAN MASON; FOR ARTISTS: BY TIMOTHY PRIANO; MAKEUP: ALLISON BROOKE. CATS: COURTESY BIDEAWE.ORG



## 7 ... does the Senate chaplain scold Congress

WASHINGTON, DC

Barry C. Black is privy to a rare sight: Democrats and Republicans holding hands. That's what the senators do at the end of the weekly Prayer Breakfast he leads. Although Black has held his post of Senate chaplain for 11 years, he drew national attention during last fall's government shutdown. The *Washington Post* dubbed him "a folk hero to many" after he spoke truth



to power in his invocations. On the shutdown's third day, he prayed, "Save us from the madness ...

Deliver us from the hypocrisy of attempting to sound reasonable while being unreasonable."

On day 11, he asked God to "give our lawmakers the wisdom to distinguish between truth and error."

Black has called his role "descriptive rather than prescriptive," but he says that during the shutdown, "I was making sure that my prayers were not so otherworldly that they had no earthly good." Amen to that.





## 8 ... is a Bloody Mary a meal

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Nothing screams America more than excess. And nothing tastes more like brunch than a Bloody Mary. Combine the two, and you get the country's latest trend in libations. The Cove in Leland, Michigan, serves its concoction with a regional delicacy, a smoked chub. In Minneapolis, the Ice-house's Bloody Homer (as in Simpson) features candied bacon and a bacon-bedecked donut. The version at Sobelman's Pub & Grill in Milwaukee is crowned with a Brussels sprout, celery, onion, mushroom, cherry tomato, lemon, pickle, shrimp, sausage, cheese, olive, green onion, asparagus, and—the pièce de résistance—a bacon cheeseburger slider.



## 9 ... does a 12-year-old build a Braille printer from LEGOs

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

After his parents received a flyer seeking donations for the visually impaired, preteen Shubham Banerjee went online to research what it's like to be blind. He was indignant to learn that Braille printers cost at least \$2,000. "Capitalizing on disadvantaged people did not seem right," he says. So he decided to



tackle the problem with what he knew best: building with LEGOs. Shubham worked with a LEGO Mindstorms EV3, an advanced set that can be used to make programmable toys like robots. After three weeks of after-school tinkering, Shubham had developed Braigo, a printer that creates Braille patterns by using a needle to punch small holes in paper.

The total cost of his machine: \$350. Shubham put his plans online as an open-source invention for other innovators. Now he's busy working on a top-secret project with LEGO.

## 10 ... do we leave bananas at a grave

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

Next time you visit Huntsville, be sure to pack a bunch—of bananas, that is. The city is home to the grave site of a special astronaut: squirrel monkey Miss Baker. In 1959, Miss Baker and Able, a rhesus monkey, were the first primates to safely return from space (they experienced nine minutes of weightlessness). Miss Baker lived at Huntsville's U.S. Space & Rocket Center until her death in 1984, and visitors still leave hundreds of bananas annually for this little space simian.



**11**

## ... do bald eagles make public appearances

PASO ROBLES, CALIFORNIA

Unlike other diplomats, Thunder the bald eagle doesn't rely on words to get his point across—his glare is enough. The victim of an oil spill and electrocution, the raptor makes more than 100 appearances a year across America as a representative of our national bird. Thunder's injuries prevent his return to the wild, so the 11-year-old lives at Conservation Ambassadors, a California nonprofit refuge that houses permanently impaired animals and advocates for protecting their kind in the wild. "People care about animals, but it can take a kick in the butt to get them to act," says David Jackson (pictured on page 71), the organization's CEO and one of the spokesperson's favorite handlers. "After meeting Thunder, everyone wants to help save them."

## 12 ... does a janitor become principal

PORT BARRE, LOUISIANA

In 1979, Gabe Sonnier (pictured on page 71) graduated fifth in his high school class and enrolled in college to study engineering. But money was scarce in his family, so he dropped out to help raise his siblings, taking a custodial job in 1981 at Port Barre Elementary



School. His work ethic impressed the principal, who one day dropped this shocker: "He said, 'I'd rather see you grading papers than picking them up,'" recalls Sonnier. But Sonnier, a father of two, waited 19 years until his youngest had completed high school before returning to college in 2000.

After eight years of mopping during the day and attending classes at night, Sonnier got a degree and a position



## 13 ... is a Muslim teen a superhero

JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY

In February, the Marvel comic book universe—home to heavy hitters like Captain America, Spider-Man, Thor, the Hulk, and Iron Man—expanded to include a unique new superhero: 16-year-old Kamala Khan, a Pakistani-American Muslim from Jersey City. Kamala possesses the power to shape-shift into anyone she chooses.

Like other American teenagers, she finds herself examining her relationship with her religion and with her very traditional family. According to her cocreator, Seattle writer (and Muslim) G. Willow Wilson, Kamala is both extraordinary *and* average—a girl struggling to discover who she is and who she wants to be. In other words, she's the perfect superhero for today's multicultural America.

COURTESY MARVEL

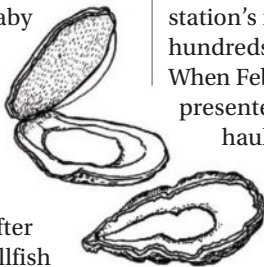
as a third-grade teacher at Port Barre. And when the principal retired in November 2013, the one man who knew everything about the school—from fixing leaks to solving multiplication tables—landed the job. “Whatever your circumstance, it doesn’t have to end there. You can finish strong,” says Sonnier, now 53. But don’t be fooled by his talk about finishing—this principal is just getting started.

## 14 ... do oysters have foster parents

CHESAPEAKE BAY,  
MARYLAND & VIRGINIA

If you think “gardening” means only roots, soil, and buds, you need to open your mind. Today, America’s most unusual volunteer gardeners are growing oysters underwater to replenish our shellfish population after a dramatic drop in supply. Oysters are aquatic all-stars: They filter the water and form reefs to create habitats for marine life.

In Maryland and Virginia’s Chesapeake Bay, Alabama’s Mobile Bay, and Rhode Island’s Narragansett Bay, nonprofits provide instruction and a cage of itty-bitty baby oysters—each smaller than a fingernail—to marine gardeners. The requirements: access to a dock or a pier and the time and interest to monitor their charges. After one year, the mature shellfish



are reintroduced into the bay. But gardeners find it’s hard to stop after one harvest. “People get addicted to seeing their oysters grow,” says Don Webster of the University of Maryland Extension.

## 15 ... do we respond with such feeling

OMAHA, NEBRASKA

Police sergeant Brian Smith, 52, is known for brightening the station house with his smile.

So when he made the offhand remark to coworker Captain Shayna Ray that he’d never received a Valentine’s Day card as a kid, she was determined to make it up to him. While Smith was out on vacation in early February, Ray posted a message on the department’s Facebook page telling people about his 20-plus years of service and encouraging them to send him a card. Her post was widely shared across the United States, and the station’s mailbox exploded with hundreds of pink and red envelopes. When February 14 arrived, officers presented the sergeant with the

haul, and he choked up. “What touched me most was receiving the handmade cards from school-children,” Smith says.

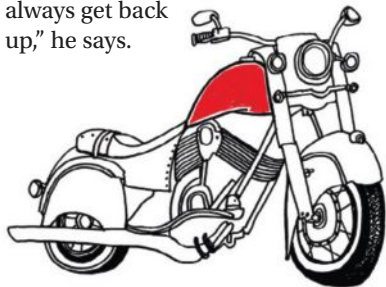


## 16 ... does an icon roar back to life

### SPIRIT LAKE, IOWA

In 1901, the first mass-produced American-made motorcycles were rolled out by Indian Motorcycles. They quickly became the nation's ride: The New York Police Department's first motorcycle squad hopped on Indians to chase criminals, and our armed forces used them during both World Wars. But by 1953, rival Harley-Davidson had captured the market, and Indian ceased production.

Numerous attempts to revive the company were unsuccessful until Polaris Industries acquired it in 2011, debuting three new Indian models last year (see page 70). Like the original, the 21st-century Indians are made in the U.S.A. (engines are manufactured in Osceola, Wisconsin; the rest of the bike is assembled in Spirit Lake, Iowa). The brand's rise and fall is a classic American story of resilience and rebirth, explains Steve Menneto, Polaris's vice president of motorcycles. "Sometimes we get knocked down, but we always get back up," he says.



## 17 ... can one woman save a city in crisis

### MARIETTA, GEORGIA

Last January's snowstorm in Atlanta will go down in record books as the city's most paralyzing weather in recent years—but also as one of the most ingenious uses of social media. Tech consultant Michelle Sollicito watched how a storm immobilized her city, and she was moved to immediately start a Facebook group to link those marooned by the weather to shelter, fuel, food, transportation, and other assistance offered by Good Samaritans.



Called SnowedOutAtlanta, its membership swelled to more than 50,000 within 24 hours. Strangers saved one another: A pregnant mom and her child found a place to stay; a man with a heart problem was taken to the hospital; and a stranded, scared 71-year-old woman received blankets and hot cocoa. "[Michelle Sollicito] has done more for our city than any official," one resident told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. "The biggest thing I learned is that everyone can do something to help people in a crisis," Sollicito, 46, says. Grateful people offered her gifts—a trip, a car, a Disney vacation, even a house—but she asked them to donate to the Red Cross instead.





## 18 ...do we get everyone out on the dance floor

### TAMPA, FLORIDA

Merry Lynn Morris has the simple goal to release everyone's inner dancer. The Rolling Dance Chair, which Morris, 38, has invented, allows people with disabilities to move fluidly across the floor. Standard wheelchairs travel jerkily and in straight lines. This chair reacts to the motion of a smartphone that's placed on the body, so that when a person leans left, it rolls left—it can even spin.

Morris, a former professional ballet dancer who teaches at the University of South Florida, was inspired in part by her father, who became disabled after a car accident. She wanted a way for wheelchair-bound people like him to enjoy moving to music again. Her father never tried the chair—she completed a prototype in 2012, and he'd passed away in 2008—but she has used it with kids who have spina bifida and cerebral palsy. She has been thrilled by their delight and reports, "One little girl said to me afterward, 'This makes me feel free!'"

## 19 ... will the first lady actually answer the phone on vacation

COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

In 1955, a typo in a Sears ad promising calls to Saint Nick directed children to the Continental Air Defense Command (CONAD). The Air Force colonel who answered played along, and since then, CONAD and its successor, the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), have taken Christmas Eve calls from young ones worldwide who have urgent queries like “Am I on the ‘nice’ list?” and “Will I see Rudolph’s nose?”

Last year, kids calling on December 24 may have



heard a familiar voice on the other end. For the past four years while on her family vacation in Hawaii, First Lady Michelle Obama has volunteered for the NORAD Santa hotline.

But it takes many elves: In 2013, more than 1,250 American and Canadian military personnel and civilians at Peterson Air Force Base fielded 117,000 calls and 11,000 e-mails. One volunteer told the American Press Service that his favorite call was from a little boy calling from India: “He asked where Santa was, and when I told him he’d passed through India

once but was coming back, he screamed, ‘Oh no, I better get to bed!’ and slammed the phone down.”

FROM LEFT: ROBERT CORNELIUS/GETTY IMAGES; ANATOL JOSEPHO, 1928-30, INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY, GIFT OF THE JOSEPHO FAMILY, 2008; COURTESY AV ARCHIVES JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM; BUZZ ALDRIN/COURTESY WHOSAY

## 20 ... did we pioneer the selfie



**1839:** Philadelphia photographer Robert Cornelius takes one of the first photographic self-portraits.



**1925:** Anatol Josepho (above) invents the photo booth, bringing the selfie into the public sphere.



**1953:** Jacqueline Kennedy and then-Senator John F. Kennedy are only two of the booth’s many famous boosters.



**1966:** Astronaut Buzz Aldrin snaps himself on a Gemini XII space-walk; he claims it was the first space selfie.

## 21 ... do we have the best-read shelter cats around

**BIRDSBORO,  
PENNSYLVANIA**

Kristy Rodriguez's ten-year-old son, Sean, was having some difficulty reading. So last August, after hearing about shelters where kids read books to dogs, Rodriguez, coordinator for the Animal Rescue League of Berks County, brought Sean in to work to meet the group's cats. He read *Goosebumps* books out loud to them, and his skills and confidence soared after just a few visits. Impressed, Rodriguez started Book Buddies, a program in which



children read to a curious if twitchy and somewhat distractible audience. It's a win-win situation for the kids and cats. "Coming into a shelter is a stressful experience for any animal," says shelter spokeswoman

Beth Ireland. "Book Buddies gives them an opportunity to be loved." Another young reader, Harlan, seven, says that when he enters the cat room with book in hand, its feline residents "get excited and start to purr." As a Book Buddy, Harlan says with pride, "I can read all by myself now, and I read to myself too."

FROM LEFT: COURTESY JENNIFER LEE; COURTESY LEBRON JAMES; ELLEN DEGENERES/AP PHOTO



**2011:** San Franciscan Jennifer Lee posts the first self-portrait with the #selfie hashtag on Instagram.



**2013:** Selfies snowball, and pet, gym, and other themed selfies emerge (LeBron James, above).



**2014:** As Academy Awards host, Ellen DeGeneres arranges a seemingly spontaneous star-studded selfie, only to have it unmasked a day later as part of a promotion for Samsung.

## 22 ... do we make our missions marketable

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA

Chris Bley, 40, has fused his two passions, rock climbing and environmental protection, into one very savvy business. As the owner of Rope Partner, a company he launched in Santa Cruz in 2001, he employs climbers and other outdoor enthusiasts to service wind turbines. Driving around America, he says, "I noticed turbines were getting taller, so I knew that they'd need people who are unafraid of heights to maintain them."

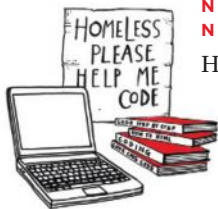
Today, Bley has 50 workers, a number that grows as wind energy's use expands. "I tell [people] my office is 300 feet in the air," said employee Terrence Green in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*. Now try topping that.

## 23 ... will a passerby stop to teach a homeless man to code

NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

Handout or hand-up? Last summer, software engineer Patrick McConlogue gave homeless

Leo Grand a choice between the two, offering him either \$100 or two months of coding lessons. Grand, who'd been living on the



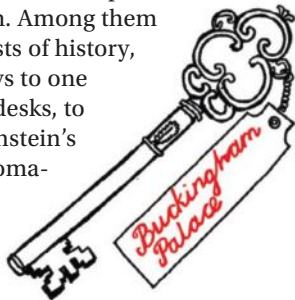
streets since losing his job in 2011, went for the instruction. McConlogue, 23, provided Grand, 37, with a basic laptop and three coding books and tutored him for an hour in the mornings. After three and a half months, Grand

had learned enough to create Trees for Cars, a smartphone app released in December that helps commuters organize carpools. "I dig the mental challenges," Grand told tech website Mashable. Meanwhile, McConlogue has launched a mentoring group to match experienced programmers with aspiring coders.

## 24 ... do we hold the key to everything

ESTES PARK, COLORADO

If you're looking for a key to Buckingham Palace, you don't have to cross the pond to find it. Simply check in to the Baldpate Inn on Twin Sisters Mountain, owner of some 30,000 keys, which hang in a room where they're organized by state and country with a descriptive tag on each. Among them are signposts of history, such as keys to one of Hitler's desks, to Dr. Frankenstein's castle in Romania, and to the U.S. Capitol.







## 25 ... does a doctor beautify buildings

SHONTO, ARIZONA

Drivers traveling through the Navajo reservation en route to the Grand Canyon may be startled to see massive faces staring at them: a quizzical child, a wrinkled elder, a laughing woman. These portraits are the work of Jetsonorama, or Dr. Chip Thomas as he's known at his day job as an Indian Health Service physician. Since 2009, he has taken and enlarged photos of tribal members, which he prints and mounts on buildings. His aim: to make onlookers pause and appreciate the Navajo. "People said they'd driven through the reservation but didn't have a sense of the residents," says Dr. Thomas, 57. "Since I started my art, I've heard about visitors stopping to look, meeting locals, and being invited home for a meal. It's a bridge between cultures." **R**

**👉 For a video of Jetsonorama making art in the desert—plus other videos and photos—download the Reader's Digest app for your iPad or Kindle Fire.**

PHOTOGRAPH BY RAMONA ROSALES

At the height of an emergency, the actor turned into a real-life superhero

# THE DAY ROBERT DOWNEY JR. SAVED MY GRANDMA



DANA  
REINHARDT  
*is the author of  
The Summer  
I Learned to  
Fly and others.*

BY DANA REINHARDT FROM QUEST FOR KINDNESS

**I'M WILLING TO GO** out on a limb here and guess that most stories of kindness do not begin with formerly drug-addicted celebrity bad boys. Mine does. You may or may not be a fan, but I am: His name is Robert Downey Jr., and it was the early '90s (I was barely 20 years old) when this story took place.

It was at a garden party for the ACLU of Southern California—my stepmother was the executive director of the organization. I was escorting my grandmother to the event.

There isn't enough room in this story to explain to you everything my grandmother was—I would need volumes. So for the sake of brevity, I will tell you that she was beautiful even in her 80s, vain as the day is long, and whip smart, though her type





of intelligence did not include recognizing young celebrities.

I pointed out Robert Downey Jr. to her when he arrived, in a gorgeous cream-colored linen suit, with Sarah Jessica Parker on his arm. My grandmother shrugged, far more interested in piling her paper plate with cheese. He wasn't Cary Grant or Gregory Peck. What did she care?



**HE TOOK HIS JACKET,  
WHICH I'D ASSUMED  
HE'D TAKEN OFF ONLY  
TO GET IT OUT OF THE  
WAY, AND HE TIED IT  
AROUND HER WOUND.**

The afternoon's main honoree was Ron Kovic, whose time in the Vietnam War left him in a wheelchair and whose story had recently been immortalized in the Oliver Stone film *Born on the Fourth of July*. I mention the wheelchair because it played a role in what happened next.

After the speeches concluded, we stood up in our front-row seats to make our exit. But as she rose, my grandmother tripped and fell smack into the wheelchair ramp that provided Ron Kovic with access to the stage. I didn't know that wheelchair ramps have sharp edges, but they do—at least this one did, and it sliced her shin right open. The blood was staggering.

I'd like to be able to tell you that I whipped into action—that I quickly took control of the situation, tending to my grandmother and calling for the ambulance that was so obviously needed—but I didn't. I sat down and put my head between my knees because I thought I was going to faint. Did I mention the blood? Luckily, somebody did take control of the situation. That person was Robert Downey Jr.

He ordered someone to call an ambulance, another to bring a glass of water, and another to fetch a blanket. He took off his gorgeous linen jacket, he rolled up his sleeves, and he grabbed hold of my grandmother's leg. Then he took the jacket, which I'd assumed he'd taken off only to get it out of the way, and he tied it around her wound. I watched the cream-colored linen turn scarlet with her blood. He told her not to worry and that everything would be all right. He knew, instinctively, how to speak to her, distract her, and—most critically—play to her vanity. He held on to her calf, and he whistled. He told her how stunning her legs were. She said to him, to my humiliation, "My granddaughter tells me you're a famous actor, but I've never heard of you."

He stayed with her until the ambulance came, and then he walked alongside the stretcher holding her hand and telling her she was breaking his heart by leaving the party so early, just as they were getting to know each other. He waved to her as they

closed the doors. "Don't forget to call me, Silvia," he said. "We'll do lunch." He was a movie star, after all.

**B**elieve it or not, I hurried into the ambulance without a word. I was too embarrassed and way too shy to thank him.

We all have things we wish we'd said, moments we'd like to revisit and reenact. Rarely do we get that chance to make up for those times when words utterly failed us. But I did—many years later.

I should mention that, later, when Robert Downey Jr. was in prison for possession of heroin, cocaine, and an unloaded .357 Magnum handgun found in his car, I thought of writing to him. I wanted to remind him of that day when he was humanity personified, when he was the best of what we each can be. On that day, he was the kindest of strangers.

But I didn't.

Some 15 years after that garden party, ten years after my grandmother had died, and five since he'd been released from prison, I saw him in a restaurant. I grew up in Los Angeles, where celebrity sightings are commonplace and where I was raised to respect people's privacy and never bother someone while he's out having a meal. But on this day, I decided to abandon the code of the native Angeleno and my own shyness, and I approached his table.

I said, "I don't have any idea if you remember this ...," and I told him the story.

He remembered.

"I just wanted to thank you," I said. "And I wanted to tell you that it was simply the kindest act I've ever witnessed."

He stood up and he took both of my hands in his and he looked into my eyes and he said, "You have absolutely no idea how much I needed to hear that today." **R**

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## FOUNDING FODDER

If our Founding Fathers wanted us to care about the rest of the world, they wouldn't have declared their independence from it.

STEPHEN COLBERT

**QUESTION:** If you crossed a famous Founding Father with a famous monster, what would you get?

**ANSWER:** Benjamin Franklinstein.

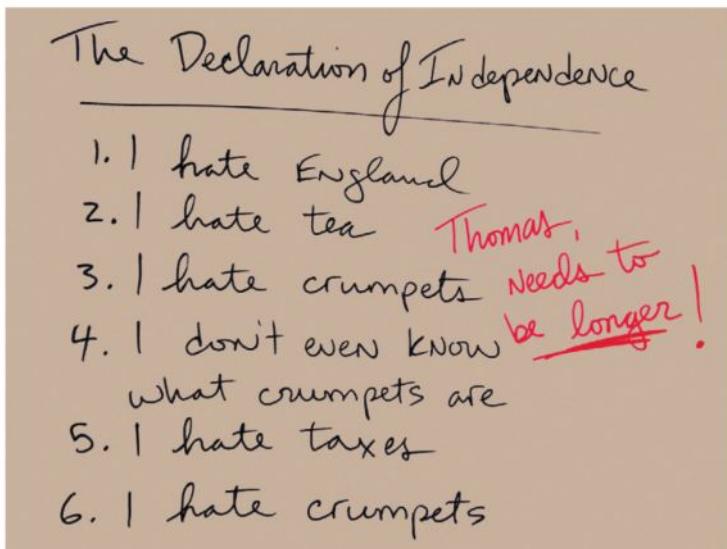
SOURCE: CRFCELEBRATEAMERICA.ORG



# Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE

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## AMERICA'S FOUNDING: FIRST DRAFT

FROM S\*\*\* ROUGH DRAFTS, BY PAUL LAUDIERO, AVAILABLE IN STORES NOW

---

**HOLD**, Brothers, Hold ... CHARGE!!!  
(Ice at the bottom of my cup)

DEMETRI MARTIN

**A HIKER STUMBLES UPON** a golden lamp in the forest. He rubs it, and out pops a real-life genie.

"In return for freeing me," says the genie, "I will grant you three wishes."

"I want a million more wishes," the hiker says immediately.

"Rule number one: No asking for more wishes."

The hiker considers his options before replying, "In that case, I want a million more genies." Source: reddit.com

**HEAR ABOUT** the new restaurant called Karma? There's no menu— you get what you deserve.

Submitted by **ADAM JOSHUA SMARGON**,  
Newark, Delaware

**A WEeping WOMAN** bursts into her hypnotherapist's office and declares, "Doctor, I have been faithful to my husband for 15 years, but yesterday I broke that trust and had an affair! The guilt is killing me. I just want to forget that it ever happened!"

The hypnotherapist shakes his head. "Not again ..."

Submitted by **ALAN LYNCH**, Ithaca, New York

**IT WAS SO HOT** in Beverly Hills, people were frying egg whites on the sidewalk. *Comedian* **MATT WOHLFARTH**

### **MORE FUNNY HASHTAGS ON TWITTER:**

■ #UnlikelySequels: Titanic 2

@DAVIDSCHNEIDER

■ #failedchildrensbooktitles: The Very Hungry Tape Worm @MADE\_DAD

■ #nicerfilmtitles: Snacks on a Plane

@ELFIEM

**A MAN WON** an \$8,000 settlement from Disneyland after he got stuck on the It's a Small World ride. He said he'll use the money to cut out the part of his brain that won't stop playing "It's a Small World After All." *Comedian* **CONAN O'BRIEN**

**THE PROBLEM WITH** math puns is that calculus jokes are all derivative, trigonometry jokes are too graphic, algebra jokes are usually formulaic, and arithmetic jokes are pretty basic. But I guess the occasional statistics joke is an outlier. *Submitted by* **DENIS EVERETT**, Coronado, California

**ONE TIME, A GUY** handed me a picture and said, "Here's a picture of me when I was younger." Every picture of you is when you were younger. *Comedian* **MITCH HEDBERG**

### **SECRETS OF GOOD-LOOKING PEOPLE**

Haircuts are great because I did none of the work but get all the credit.

@LUDWIG (Ludwig Pettersson)

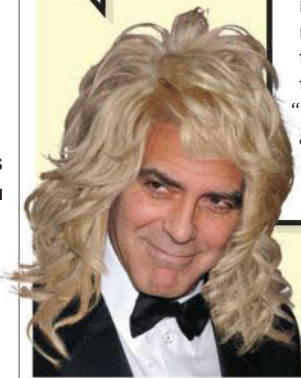
People always ask me how long it takes to do my hair. I don't know. I'm never there.

**DOLLY PARTON**

I don't think George Clooney has a bathroom mirror, just a note taped to the wall that says "Don't worry about it."

*Comedian*

**ELI YUDIN**



**With the \$100 we'll pay if we publish your gag, you'll feel positively Clooney-esque. See page 9 or [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit) for details.**

# “GET ME OUT OF HERE!”

BY KENNETH MILLER

## *Trapped on the bottom of the ocean*

**A**T 4:30 ON A SUNDAY MORNING, two hours before dawn, the tugboat *Jacson 4* was towing a tanker toward an oil platform 20 miles off the coast of Nigeria. The wind was stiff and the sea choppy, but conditions weren't rough enough to alarm the Ukrainian captain or his crew of 11 Nigerians. Most of them were in bed,





*Harrison Okene was  
the only survivor  
after his boat sank  
to the ocean floor.*

their doors bolted against pirates—a constant menace in this corner of the South Atlantic. The tug's cook, Harrison Okene, was below deck, preparing to start his shift.

Suddenly, a rogue wave struck the vessel broadside. The towrope snapped, throwing the boat off-balance. Okene, 29, was tossed around.

anything that might help him survive. In one cabin, he found a life vest fitted with two emergency beacons. In the engineers' office, there were tools; he used a screwdriver to remove the beacons, which he stuffed into his boxer shorts (the only clothing he was wearing) to keep his hands free.

Aided by the lights, Okene discov-

**“ OKENE HAD NO IDEA HOW LONG THE AIR POCKET WOULD LAST OR IF ANYONE WOULD FIND HIM BEFORE IT DISAPPEARED.**

He saw three men washed away as they ran toward an exit hatch. The rush of water swept Okene into the officers' bathroom, where he held on to the sink to keep his head from going under. "Everywhere was dark as I was thrown from one end of the [boat] to the other," Okene told a reporter for Nigeria's *Nation* newspaper. In moments, the craft had turned upside down and begun sinking toward the ocean floor, 100 feet below.

An overturned boat doesn't always fill with water immediately; like an inverted cup plunged underwater, it can hold pockets of air that persist for some time. That was the case with the *Jacson 4*. Once the boat settled on the bottom, Okene swam or waded from room to pitch-dark room, groping for

ered a cabin that had been kept mostly dry by an air pocket. As the water crept higher, he used a hammer to pry paneling off the wall. He laid the planks atop a stack of mattresses. Then he stood on the platform—clutching a bottle of Coke that he'd come across in his rummaging—and prayed that the water would stop rising. After reaching his chest, it did.

Okene had no idea how long the air pocket would last or if anyone would find him before it disappeared. All he could do was wait and hope. To pass time, he replayed his life, beginning with his earliest memories. He thought about his wife of five years, Akpos, and wondered if he would live to become a father. He was distracted by thrashing sounds outside the cabin

and guessed that sharks or barracudas were eating the bodies of friends he'd been laughing with the night before. Terrified, he grabbed a plank of paneling to fend off predators.

Okene made the soda last as long as possible, but when it ran out, hunger and thirst set in. His skin began to peel from soaking in salt water; his tongue grew sore and swollen, and his body temperature dropped lower and lower. The emergency beacons fizzled out, leaving him in darkness again. He was unbearably tired, but he recited Bible verses to keep himself awake. If he slept, he knew, he might drown or be devoured. Or he might miss his rescuers, should they ever appear.

And then he heard something banging on the hull of the boat. Okene grabbed a hammer and banged back. A few minutes later, a light appeared in the water beneath him—a diver's headlamp. The man touched Okene's fingers, thinking he'd found a corpse. Okene squeezed the man's hand. "He's alive! He's alive!" the diver shouted into his radio headset.

As Okene later learned, the company that owned the tugboat had hired a South African scuba team, DCN Diving, to recover bodies from the vessel; they'd found four corpses and were astounded to discover that Okene was not the fifth.

The search team fitted Okene with an oxygen mask, then hustled him into a diving bell, which took him to

the surface. When he saw the starry sky, he assumed he'd spent a day underwater. In fact, the men told him, it was Tuesday evening. He'd been trapped underwater for 62 hours—nearly three full days.

Okene spent another 60 hours in a decompression chamber. At last, he returned home to the city of Warri, on the Niger Delta, where he reunited with his loved ones and tried to put the nightmare behind him.

**O**KENE'S SHOCKING story has intrigued scientists all over the world. How could a man survive in a four-foot-high air pocket underwater for three days without running out of oxygen, being poisoned by the carbon dioxide he exhaled, or succumbing to hypothermia? Maxim Umansky, a physicist at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, speculates that another air pocket under the hull of the boat must have been feeding additional oxygen into Okene's air pocket. Anna V., a commenter on the Stack Exchange Physics blog, got more philosophical: "He was just lucky that the air siphoned where he was trapped."

Okene, the *Jacson 4's* sole survivor, is grateful for his deliverance, but he isn't sure he'll ever go back to sea. "Sometimes it feels like the bed I'm sleeping in is sinking," he told a Reuters reporter. "I jump up screaming." **R**





*College friends Smith,  
Jones, and Troxel  
endured frigid  
temperatures.*

## Stuck in an ice cave

**D**RAWN BY the promise of dazzling subterranean scenery, Nate Smith, Simon Jones, and Jarin Troxel set out to explore Wyoming's Darby Canyon Wind and Ice Caves from nearby Rexburg, Idaho, one Saturday in May 2013.

Smith and Jones were friends at Brigham Young University's Rexburg campus; their buddy Troxel was on leave from the college. Smith and Troxel had navigated the cave system the previous autumn, but neither had done any other technically demanding routes like this one that would require climbing and rappelling, and Jones was a complete novice. But the young men were fit and equipped with climbing ropes, headlamps, and snacks.

The trio left their car at the Darby Canyon trailhead at about noon, hiked up the snowy mountainside, and reached the mouth of the ice cave at 3 p.m. Judging by Smith and Troxel's earlier expedition, they expected to reach the end of the Wind Cave to exit about ten hours later. The descent began with an exhilarating slide down an icy slope, then a 75-foot rappel down a frozen waterfall. They moved through a chamber of stalactites and another carpeted with transparent globes the size of dinosaur eggs.

Soon afterward, the men came to passages so low that they were forced to belly-crawl. Troxel had brought directions he'd found online, but they were hazy; several times, the group hit what seemed like dead ends and were forced to reverse course. At 3 a.m., they came to a rushing river where there should have been a narrow creek. Smith and Jones went off to investigate, while an exhausted Troxel lay down on the rocks and took a nap.

When the scouts returned, they reported that the river would indeed lead them out of the cave system. Afraid that the fast-moving water might sweep him downriver, Troxel fastened a rope to a small stone arch to stabilize himself. But as he set foot into the water, the arch gave way, and he tumbled into the frigid river. "I'm OK, guys," Troxel said, getting to his feet. But his clothes were soaked, and as he refastened the rope to a more secure pillar, he was shaking with cold. After fording the river and a hip-deep pool, Smith and Jones were shivering too. The trio managed to rappel down a 20-foot-deep pit without incident, but as Troxel clambered down the other side, he fell again. Once more he insisted he was fine.

A while later, the men reached a cave about ten feet in diameter; the floor was covered with ice that rose



into a small mound at the far edge of the chamber. This mound, Troxel said, was the ice plug that blocked the exit throughout winter and into spring. There had been no plug during his earlier visit to the cave with Smith. Still, he thought it could be cut through easily with his ice ax.

Troxel took turns with the others

men began shouting for help. Someone yelled back, "We're coming!"

It took another 45 minutes for members of the Teton County Search and Rescue team to clear away the four-foot-thick plug. Finally, a man in a hard hat climbed through the narrow opening. The search had begun that morning, the rescuers explained,

**“NONE OF THEM SAID WHAT THEY WERE ALL THINKING: AT THIS RATE, WE’LL NEVER BREAK THROUGH.”**

whacking at the mound. But the slope of the roof made it impossible to get a good swing. For hours, the men rotated between chopping, resting under a space blanket, and pacing to keep off the chill. Sleep was out of the question—after dozing for a few minutes, they would jolt awake with chattering teeth. To keep up their spirits, the men prayed and told jokes. By mid-morning, however, they had a new reason for worry: As the hole in the ice plug slowly deepened, it filled with slushy meltwater, which splashed them with each ax blow and further reduced the blade's impact. None of them said what they were all thinking: At this rate, we'll never break through.

Around 4:30 p.m., Smith saw light penetrating the ice from the other side of the plug. Hearing faint voices, the

when Smith and Jones's roommate, Denis Tang, called to report them missing. Two dozen volunteers had combed Darby Canyon on snowshoes and in snowmobiles and ATVs.

Team members guided Troxel, Smith, and Jones through the last stretch of the Wind Cave, and the trio stepped into daylight for the first time in 27 hours. When the young men reached the trailhead, at 7:30, friends and family members rushed to embrace them. "Seeing how many people loved and supported us was overwhelming," Jones said. "We've come to recognize the value of preparedness."

All told, the guys weren't seriously injured, and the incident hasn't diminished their love of spelunking. They even plan to return to the caves this summer.



## Kept on a plane for 34 hours

**O**N MARCH 30, 2014, Luke Hopewell and about 250 other passengers boarded Cathay Pacific Flight CX831 at New York's John F. Kennedy airport, expecting to touch down in Hong Kong 15 hours later. Hopewell, the editor of Gizmodo Australia, a technology website, often travels back and forth between his home near Sydney and the United States via Hong Kong for business.

Including the nine-hour Sydney flight, the whole day would be "unpleasant yet manageable," Hopewell wrote in a blog a few days later.

About an hour before Hong Kong, it began to storm. Lightning flashed, and rain, wind, and hail shook the Boeing 777. The pilot then relayed some news to his passengers: The Hong Kong International Airport ground crew had announced that the severe weather would make a landing too dangerous, and the flight was being redirected to nearby Zhuhai Jinwan Airport.

A half hour later, the plane landed in Zhuhai. "The next several hours were tense," wrote Hopewell. "It was pouring rain." The passengers figured the storm would keep them in Zhuhai for the night.

Hopewell and the other passengers began gathering their bags to move to the airport terminal. But again, the captain's voice crackled over the

speaker: "The Chinese government will not let us off the plane."

This time, the issue was a lack of immigration and customs officials in the Zhuhai airport to process the travelers from the United States. In addition, the flight crew had reached their maximum number of hours on the plane and would have to leave. It would take hours for a new crew to arrive.

By now, "the plane had run out of food and water and fuel for the auxiliary engine that was keeping the air-conditioning on," wrote Hopewell.

Over the next 16 hours, Hopewell rationed a package of Oreo cookies, took tiny sips of water from a small bottle, and tried to distract himself from the maddening boredom by playing games on his iPad and watching movies over and over. Around 2 p.m. the next day, nearly 34 hours after leaving New York, Flight CX831 was finally airborne again, landing in Hong Kong about an hour later.

As the harried passengers disembarked, Cathay Pacific representatives handed each of them an apology letter and a check for 1,000 Hong Kong dollars (approximately \$130).

After a few more hours at the airport, Hopewell forced himself to board the nine-hour flight to Sydney, but he hasn't flown since. "I'm still deciding if I can ever get back on a 777," he wrote. **R**

An investigative report shatters the illusion of one of  
Animal Planet's most popular reality shows

# Watch *for the* **Out** **Wildman!**

BY JAMES WEST FROM *MOTHER JONES*

**BY THE TIME THREE ORPHANED** raccoons arrived for emergency care at the Kentucky Wildlife Center in April 2012, “they were emaciated,” says Karen Bailey, a newborn-raccoon specialist who runs the nonprofit clinic outside Georgetown, in central Kentucky. “They were almost dead.”

Bailey cares for up to 800 animals annually, including opossums, otters, and skunks, but she is haunted by the memory of those cubs.



These weren't just any raccoons—they were the stars of an episode of *Call of the Wildman*, the hit Animal Planet reality-TV show that regularly attracts more than a million viewers. When the episode about the raccoon cubs, “Baby Mama Drama,” aired in July 2012, it pulled in 1.6 million viewers, becoming the show's highest-rated episode up to that point. Thanks in part to *Call of the Wildman*, Discovery Communications, Animal Planet's parent company, was among the top-three fastest-growing ad-supported cable networks in 2012. The trend continued in 2013.

## Fluffy's Got Babies

*Call of the Wildman* follows the exploits of Ernie Brown Jr., aka Turtleman, a wildlife rescuer from Lebanon, Kentucky. To give the show its charm, Animal Planet teamed up with the production company Sharp Entertainment, which specializes in what has become known as guided reality.

In the raccoon segment, Turtleman must trap an animal that is terrorizing a Kentucky family and, we're told, may be carrying rabies. Turtleman corners the raccoon in the family's laundry room. He then learns the real problem: “Fluffy doesn't have rabies—



***Call of the Wildman* is “100 percent fake,” said a source involved with the show's production.**

With three seasons under its belt, *Wildman* is part of Animal Planet's ongoing shift away from educational programming to reality TV. “We're looking to be an entertainment destination, not a natural history channel,” Animal Planet group president Marjorie Kaplan told the *New York Times* in 2008.

But Bailey, for one, thinks the company has veered off course. “The old Animal Planet was dedicated to education about animals and conservation,” she says. “But to put these animals in stressful situations and to not look out for their well-being—it's wrong, and it's disappointing.”

she's got babies!” As always, there's a happy ending—mom and cubs safe at a wildlife sanctuary, a family no longer under siege: “We had no idea that there were babies underneath the house!” the homeowner says.

In fact, the segment was almost entirely concocted. Three sources involved with the show confirmed that producers typically get animals from farms or trappers and put them in fake rescue situations.

“It was part of my job to call around to people to trap animals at the direction of Sharp,” says Jamie, who worked on the show. (Jamie's name has been changed.)



"It's 100 percent fake," said a second production source.

Animal Planet and Sharp admit to staging rescues. However, "many of these nuisance animals would be exterminated when caught," says Dan Adler, a Sharp senior vice president. "The animals featured in *Call of the Wildman* are relocated."

For his part, Ernie Brown Jr. told *Channel Guide Magazine* in 2011 that "people have been calling me fake, and there ain't no fake ... I'm catching animals." But internal production documents show that *Call of the Wildman* is tightly staged. "We would basically pitch the entire script that was sent to Animal Planet weeks ahead of time with the exact animal and location," says Jamie.

The *Wildman* crew also may have incorrectly filled out legal documents about the show's wildlife activities. Animal Planet says the featured raccoons were brought to them on two separate occasions. Turtleman is a licensed Commercial Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator (NWCO) in Kentucky, a qualification that allows him to trap animals for money and



*Ernie Brown Jr. wrestled a snapping turtle on the Today show in 2012.*

requires him to record all captures and report them to the state's Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. But forms completed under Ernie Brown Jr.'s name suggest that the raccoons were caught on the same day and released on private land rather than turned over to a rehabilitator. Animal Planet calls the entry a "clerical error."

Discovery Communications states

in its code of ethics: "Our commitment to creative and innovative programming is matched only by our steadfast commitment to honesty and integrity in everything we do."

But a seven-month *Mother Jones* investigation—which drew on internal documents, interviews with eight people involved in the show's production, and government records—reveals evidence of a culture that tolerated dubious activities, including using a sedated animal and trapping wild animals, which were then "caught" again as part of a script.

"We've always made the humane treatment of animals our top priority," says Sharp. "The idea that animals are drugged is false."

## Bats in the Hair Salon

Documents and sources also raise troubling questions about a *Wildman* segment shot at Jazzy Girls, a beauty salon in Houston, in April last year.

“A skittering sound in the storage room has been terrorizing the hairdressers,” says the voice-over in “Bat Hair Day,” which aired in early August 2013. When salon owner Velma Trayham hires Turtleman, he “discovers” a group of Mexican free-tailed bats.

Animal Planet and Sharp acknowledge that the bats were placed in the salon for the purpose of filming, but

from the bats they’d brought in. But *Mother Jones* has seen documents indicating that Sharp paid for bat-removal service on two occasions, and two sources say one animal was definitely a Mexican free-tailed bat. Trayham declined to be interviewed.

## The Zebra and the Mink

In another Texas-based episode, “Lone Stars and Stripes,” Turtleman attempts to capture a zebra that has supposedly escaped from its fenced-in yard at a ranch. He chases the animal in his pickup; eventually he corners the zebra and tackles it.



## Animal Planet and Sharp Entertainment Company confirmed that a zebra was drugged before filming.

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they claim that it happened legally. “Everyone involved in the production [knows] to follow all laws during every aspect of the production,” Adler says.

Texas law allows people to remove bats from their homes or businesses, though Jonah Evans, a biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, told us that taking a bat to a new location for entertainment purposes alone is not allowed.

In the weeks after the shooting, documents show, Animal Planet contracted with a pest-control company to remove dead bats from the salon. Sharp says only one was recovered, and it was a different species

But production sources report that the zebra seemed woozy during filming. Animal Planet and Sharp obtained the zebra from the Franklin Drive Thru Safari, an animal park run by businessman Jason Clay. He confirmed that he supplied the zebra but denied using sedatives. Clay is licensed under the federal regulations for animal exhibitors, which specify that “drugs, such as tranquilizers, shall not be used to facilitate, allow, or provide for public handling of the animals” and that “handling of animals should not cause ... unnecessary discomfort.”

Despite Clay’s denial, Animal Planet

and Sharp confirmed to *Mother Jones* that the zebra was drugged before filming, but they say it happened behind their backs. However, Jamie and other sources say the crew was aware of the zebra's drugging during filming. "They sedated the zebra, to get it to be less crazy," says another source.

The American Humane Association, which bestows the coveted "No Animals Were Harmed" disclaimer, is not required on nonunion sets, such as that of *Call of the Wildman*, and the group says no one from the show has invited the group to monitor animals. Sharp says that it now employs a USDA-licensed animal handler to enforce new guidelines, which include the proper treatment of animals during transportation and acquisition.

But prior to these changes, Animal Planet asked untrained staff members to handle animals, say the sources. In one episode, Turtleman is called in to track down a mink vandalizing a miniature golf course in Lexington, Kentucky. Because of scheduling issues, the mink was kept caged for

up to a week at the home of a local production staffer, Will Johnston, according to two sources who worked on the show. Johnston declined to comment. Animal Planet confirms the mink was not Johnston's pet.

Sharp said in a statement that "it has always been *COTWM* policy that show staff not be asked to handle the animals on a production. Prior to season three, occasionally, staff members were asked to supply food or water or to accompany a licensed officer in the transport of animals."

But the new policies, say members of the show's crew, may not fix all the problems with the show's animal-handling culture. "I think the entire model is wrong," said one of the sources. "I don't think the needs of production [should] trump the needs of the ethical treatment of these animals." **R**

*Since this article was published, in January 2014, U.S. Department of Agriculture officials have opened an inquiry into the cases outlined in the investigation.*

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MOTHER JONES (JANUARY 21, 2014), MOTHERJONES.COM.

COMING SOON

## TERROR AT THE BEACH

*A couple hunted by a deadly predator, a little boy lost under sand,  
and a group of swimmers caught in a riptide.*

### You Be the Judge

An unlucky onlooker is hit in the face by a wayward baseball. Can she sue and win?

### PLUS:

- When "Normal" Blood Sugar Isn't
- How to Take a Stand

# PHOTO

OF LASTING  
INTEREST



**Photograph by  
LeRoy Grannis**

**Chosen by  
Karen Rinaldi,**

*executive editor  
at HarperCollins*

"This photo—*Midget Farrelly Surfing Shore Break at Makaha, 1968*—is all about the contradictory notion of control and surrender. It lives with me everywhere I go."

© LEROY GRANNIS/COURTESY M+B GALLERY, LOS ANGELES







On this California block, help and hope are always free of charge

# A SHARED SWEETNESS

BY SUSAN STRAIGHT  
FROM THE *SUN*

**F**OR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, I have lived on this dead-end street, where the bluff drops off into the Santa Ana River floodplain, where garages have been turned into mother-in-law flats or apartments for recent immigrants. A few of my neighbors have been here even longer, but we lost three of them during the Great Recession that everyone thinks is over now. Diane (all names have been changed to protect people's privacy) lost her job at a heating-and-air-conditioning company and then lost her house; Anthony's wife left him for someone else, and then Anthony lost his house; and Rick took his family to Central California because he lost the business he'd been running in his garage, making tire-pressure gauges.

Lemons are 69 cents each at the grocery store, and my daughter needs ten of them for a recipe, but we put them back. All ten.

We go over to Sandra's house, where her Meyer lemon tree is loaded with the sweetest thin-skinned fruit, better than the store's, anyway. Sandra's



husband has decided to leave her and their autistic son to pursue his new love, who is 30. (He is 68.) Sandra's house is "underwater," a term no one had ever heard of until this new Dust Bowl of mortgage fraud. Sandra's husband went for one of those aggressive home loans from a company that's being sued by the federal government. But the suing won't help Sandra. When we hear news of "settlements" that happen years after someone has lost a house, we often talk about who gets the money now that the lawn has turned to straw, the roses to potpourri on their stems.

Sandra is a seamstress, so I ask her to repair the hem on my favorite dress, which I bought 12 years ago. We pick a bag of lemons, and then, while we talk at the curb, my daughter takes the fruit inside our house. A van pulls up—it's our neighbor Julia, from down the street. She was laid off from her last job, then hired as a waitress at a new restaurant that will open in two months. Two months is a long time with no income, especially when her employer required her to purchase a uniform with her own money.

The discussion of the economy at the top levels is all about cliffs, ceilings, sequesters, and bargaining chips. At the level of curb and neighbor and fence, it is about chicken noodle soup and beef ravioli, which I know are on sale—less than a dollar per can.

On my porch are eight bags of the best navel oranges in my city here in

Southern California, just picked by Mr. Gordon from his own trees a few blocks away. His son was my student at the local college 24 years ago, and for two decades, he has brought us oranges. The smell fills the air near my front door. I divide them every year among family and friends—that's why he brings them. I hand one bag to Julia through the van window, and she goes home to her son and her father.

It is January, and there's snow on the ground in many other places, but my house is full of bounty. This is why my mother's family moved to this region from Switzerland, and my stepfather's parents from Canada: the promise of fruit on the trees even while the mountains are dusted in white, the sun not punishing, as it is in August, but gentle and nourishing.

In my kitchen are huge avocados picked by Karla, who lives nearby. Her daughter brings me a bag every week. Since her third husband left, Karla is barely making her rent payments. She is a surgical technician, hired part-time by hospitals when they need her; she is also a surrogate mother, for the third time, carrying a pregnancy for a wealthy couple, and that employment is beyond full-time. I bring her a bag of oranges, and eggs from my chickens, and I always buy whatever her son and daughter are selling for their school fund-raisers: candles and candy and raffle tickets. (She has five children and three grandchildren.)

I have tangerines from my best friend, who lives a few blocks away. She is a widow and, like me, has three kids. We met when her husband was ill with cancer and my husband had his midlife crisis and moved out, and I began to cook dinner for us both.

And then my ex-husband stops by for his bag of oranges, but he also drops off a box of tea and a carton of half-and-half he got at the 99-cent store.




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**THIS IS HOW IT WORKS,  
IN HARD TIMES AND  
IN GOOD TIMES.  
WE WOMEN STAND ON  
THE SIDEWALK TO  
SEE WHO NEEDS WHAT.**

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I am wearing a cashmere sweater handed down by my daughter's best friend's mother—she gave me four sweaters in the fall.

This is how it works when times are hard and even when times are better, if we're lucky. We women stand on the sidewalk and rest our backs against fences and lean into open car windows to see who needs what. In my 25 years living on this block, there have been recessions before, but this one has lasted the longest.

So all week my daughter and I have eaten avocados that slice like butter and scrambled eggs from our chickens,

three of which my ex-husband rescued from the backyard of someone who was losing her house.

We are not underwater. That is a false metaphor. We are treading water while those above us—corporations and even federal and state officials—seem to be heaving paperwork at us or tossing down invective about food stamps (some people on the block had to resort to them briefly, secretly, and were relieved to stop) and health benefits (Sandra's autistic son's assistance for dental work, glasses, and in-home care has been slashed).

We have tea and oranges and tangerines, which we can only hope is enough for now. We have each other, which is what people had in the 1930s and during the other recessions. I have a beautiful gray cashmere sweater on my shoulders. Lemons in the old juicer on the counter.

I have saved so much during my life on this street. Today, I figure, Sandra saved me at least \$15, with the lemons and my dress hem. At dusk, I head to the store and get ten cans of chicken noodle soup, ten cans of beef ravioli, and five frozen pizzas, all on sale—because that's what a boy down the block likes to eat. And then I sit on my own front porch, waiting for the coyotes that will come up from the river much later and the raccoons and possums that will nose around for the sweet, dimpled peels of citrus on the sidewalks. **R**

*Eric Waggoner  
playing it safe in  
the Elk River*





The author pulls no punches when a chemical spill threatens the water supply in his native West Virginia

# A. Poison Runs Through It

BY ERIC WAGGONER FROM THE *HUFFINGTON POST*

**O**N SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, I drove two hours south through the rain to Charleston, West Virginia, the city where I was born and where my parents, my sister, her husband, and my niece still live. In my car were ten cases of bottled water, as my family hadn't been able to use tap water since Thursday. That's when a spill at the chemical company Freedom Industries dumped some 10,000 gallons of the hazardous material 4-methylcyclohexane methanol (MCHM) into the Elk River, a mile and a half upstream from the intake pipes for West Virginia American Water,

affecting nine counties that the company serves. The spill was a result of leaks in a storage tank and in a concrete containment wall—structural problems that were underregulated by West Virginia’s Department of Environmental Protection. Pollution prevention plans, we’ve all been told, that would have helped to address those concerns apparently weren’t filed with the state.

About a mile and a half outside the city, past small wood-frame houses, gas stations, and grocery stores, I smelled it—the odor of the MCHM coming in through the car vents. The smell was both sweet and sharp.

I’m no dewy-eyed innocent about chemical leaks. They were a regular occurrence when I was a kid. But something about this confluence, the way I had to bring potable water to my family from two hours north, the strange look of the landscape wreathed in rain and mist, the stench of a chemical that was housed directly upstream from the water company—something about all of that made me absolutely buoyant in my rage. This was not the rational anger one encounters in response to a specific wrong, nor even the righteous anger that comes from an articulate reaction to years of systematic mistreatment.

This was blind animal rage, and it filled my body to the limits of my skin. And this is what I thought:

**TO HELL WITH YOU.** To hell with every greedhead operator who flocked here throughout history because you wanted what we had but wanted us to go underground and get it for you. To hell with you for offering above-average wages in a place filled with

workers who’d never had a decent shot at employment or education and then treating the people you found here like just another material resource—suitable for exploiting and using up and then discarding when they’d outlived their usefulness.

To hell with you all for exploiting the lax,

poorly enforced safety regulations here so that you could do your business in the cheapest manner possible by shortcutting the health and quality of life of not only your workers but also everybody who lives here. To hell with every operator who ever referred to West Virginians as “our neighbors.”

To hell with every single screw-job elected official and politico who helped write those lax regulations and then turned away when even those weren’t followed. To hell with you all, who were supposed to be stewards of the public interest and who sold



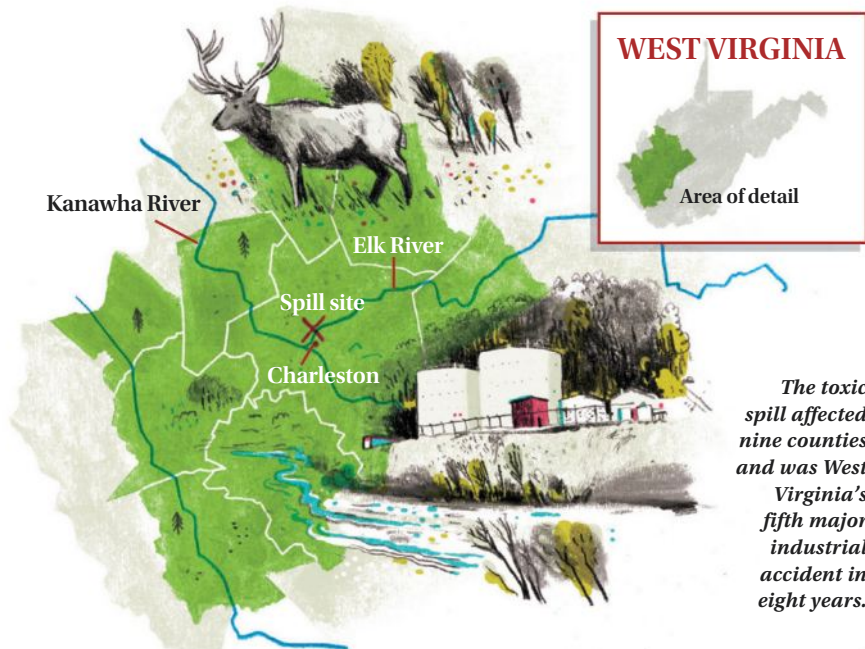
***This was not  
the rational anger  
one encounters in  
response to a  
specific wrong.  
This was blind  
animal rage.***

us out for money, for political power. To hell with every one of you who decided that making life convenient for business meant making life dangerous for us. To hell with you for making us the eggs you had to break in order to make breakfast.

To hell with everyone who ever asked me how I could stand to live in a place like this, so dirty and unhealthy and uneducated. To hell with everyone who ever asked me why people don't just leave, don't just quit (and go to one of the other thousand jobs I suppose you imagine are widely available here), like it never occurred to us, as if we dumb hill jacks would only listen as you

explained the safety hazards, we'd all suddenly recognize something that hadn't been on our radar until now. To hell with the superior attitude one so often encounters in these conversations and usually from people who have no idea about the complexity and the long history at work in it. To hell with the person I met who, within ten seconds of finding out I was from West Virginia, congratulated me on being able to read.

And as long as I'm roundhouse damning everyone, and since my own relatives worked in the coal mines and I can therefore play the Family Card, the one that trumps everything around here: To hell with all my fellow



## WEST VIRGINIA

Area of detail

*The toxic spill affected nine counties and was West Virginia's fifth major industrial accident in eight years.*

West Virginians who bought so deeply into the idea of avoidable personal risk and constant sacrifice as an honorable condition under which to live that they turned that condition into a culture of perverted, twisted pride and self-righteousness, to be celebrated and defended against outsiders. To hell with that insular, xenophobic pathology. To hell with everyone whose only takeaway from every story about every explosion, every leak, every mine collapse, is some vague and idiotic vanity in the continued endurance of West Virginians under adverse, sometimes killing circumstances. To hell with everyone everywhere who ever mistook suffering for honor and who ever taught that to their kids. There's nothing honorable about suffering. Nothing.

**LIKE I SAID**, it wasn't rational. I'm not an eco-warrior or a Luddite, and I'm not antibusiness or even anti-industry. But there are sensible, sane ways to do things. (A mile and a half upstream from a water intake facility?! Upstream!) That's what a society does to protect the people who live in it.

Having been made to endure screwed-up Air, Earth, and Water, we ought to make sure that history goes with us, always, into the voting booth, into the streets, into the home, into the wider world. Otherwise, to steal a line from the old hymn, we'll all of us, residents and politicians and operators alike, find ourselves standing in the Fire Next Time. **R**

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Eric Waggoner chairs the English department at West Virginia Wesleyan College.

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## ACRONYMS ARE EVERYWHERE

Did you know that search engine Yahoo! and many brand names we see every day are actually acronyms in disguise?

Here's what those letters really stand for:

### NECCO (AS IN THE WAFER) REALLY STANDS FOR:

New England Confectionery Company.

### M&M'S REALLY STANDS FOR:

Mars and Murrie's, the last names of the candy's cocreators.

### YAHOO! REALLY STANDS FOR:

Yet Another Hierarchical Official Oracle!

Source: rd.com

# Laugh Lines

COMEDIANS-IN-CHIEF

Being president is like running a cemetery: You've got a lot of people under you, and nobody's listening.

**BILL CLINTON**

I have left orders to be awakened at any time in case of a national emergency—even if I'm in a Cabinet meeting.

**RONALD REAGAN**

Nothing was ever done so systematically as nothing is being done now.

**WOODROW WILSON**

Give me a one-handed economist! All my economists say, "On the one hand ... on the other."

**HARRY TRUMAN**

If you could kick the person in the pants responsible for most of your trouble, you wouldn't sit for a month.

**THEODORE ROOSEVELT**

If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN**



PROP STYLIST: ANGELA CAMPOS FOR STOCKLAND MARTEL. GETTY IMAGES (GLASSES)



# To Survive Flesh-Eating Bacteria



HAMPTON SIDES is an award-winning author and an editor-at-large for *Outside* magazine.

BY HAMPTON SIDES FROM *OUTSIDE* MAGAZINE

**IT STARTED OUT** as a funny little patch on my right elbow, itchy and raw. I figured it was a bug bite and gave it no more thought. But the next day, I woke up with throbbing pain and curious-looking red streaks extending up and down my arm.

A few hours later, my forearm had swelled hideously, and the skin had grown rigid and hot to the touch. I started to breathe uneasily. I felt dizzy and feverish, then collapsed half-delirious on the floor. My wife, Anne, rushed me to the hospital, where the ER docs found that I was in septic shock.

What I had was a rare flesh-eating streptococcus infection, introduced by a puncture wound of uncertain origin—possibly from a spider bite. I'd just returned from several months in Kuwait and Qatar, where I was writing about the Iraq war. Maybe I'd picked up the bacteria there?

Technically known as necrotizing fasciitis, the infection was something out of a Stephen King novel: Great ravening armies of microbes were laying waste to the meat of my arm, filling my subcutaneous tissues with exotoxins. The ER doc took a black Sharpie and drew a line near my wrist, noting that if the redness advanced beyond this boundary, I would be in serious trouble.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (SIDES)



Over the next hour, the strep marched right past the mark and was well on its way to my hand; half my arm had been consumed.

The doctor told Anne we should be prepared: Cutting off my arm might be the only way to save me.

I was 41 years old, in the prime of life, and (I thought) in excellent health. In a week, Anne and I were set to move into a house we'd spent a year renovating. We'd just emerged from the Urine Years—our three boys, at last, were done with diapers. My career was more or less where I wanted it to be. I was feeling ... not invincible but firmly in control of my luck.

But my uninvited guests had made a deep impression on me—the idea that these superbug strains are just out there, a skin thickness away, loitering in their millions on the ordinary surfaces of the world. Life was even more fragile, more fraught with random hazard, than I'd realized.

When the ER doctor sliced open my arm to "irrigate" the tissues, the stuff that came out was beyond disgusting.

He pumped various IV antibiotics into me, but they didn't work. He speculated that perhaps something in the inoculations that a Marine medic had given me in Kuwait—a cocktail that included the anthrax and smallpox vaccines—had compromised my immune system. But he had one more item in his quiver, an astronomically expensive "designer" antibiotic.

"This one," he said, "is on loan from God."

It took a day, but the red armies began to recede. In a few weeks, my arm was back to normal.

I'm 51 now, and our kids are in college or on the verge of it. The Taxi Service Years have given way to the Raise a Vein for the Bursar Years.

Now Anne and I are feeling freer to move about the cabin again. We're thinking of living abroad, learning a new culture, a new language. Chile looks good, or Barcelona. We're going to wing it. Wherever it is, I'll look upon the adventure as time on loan from God—or at least from his antibiotics department. **R**

# Hope Lives Forever

(in guys like Doug Bernier)



**JOHN FEINSTEIN** is a bestselling author and sportswriter. He hosts a daily radio show on the CBS Sports Radio Network.

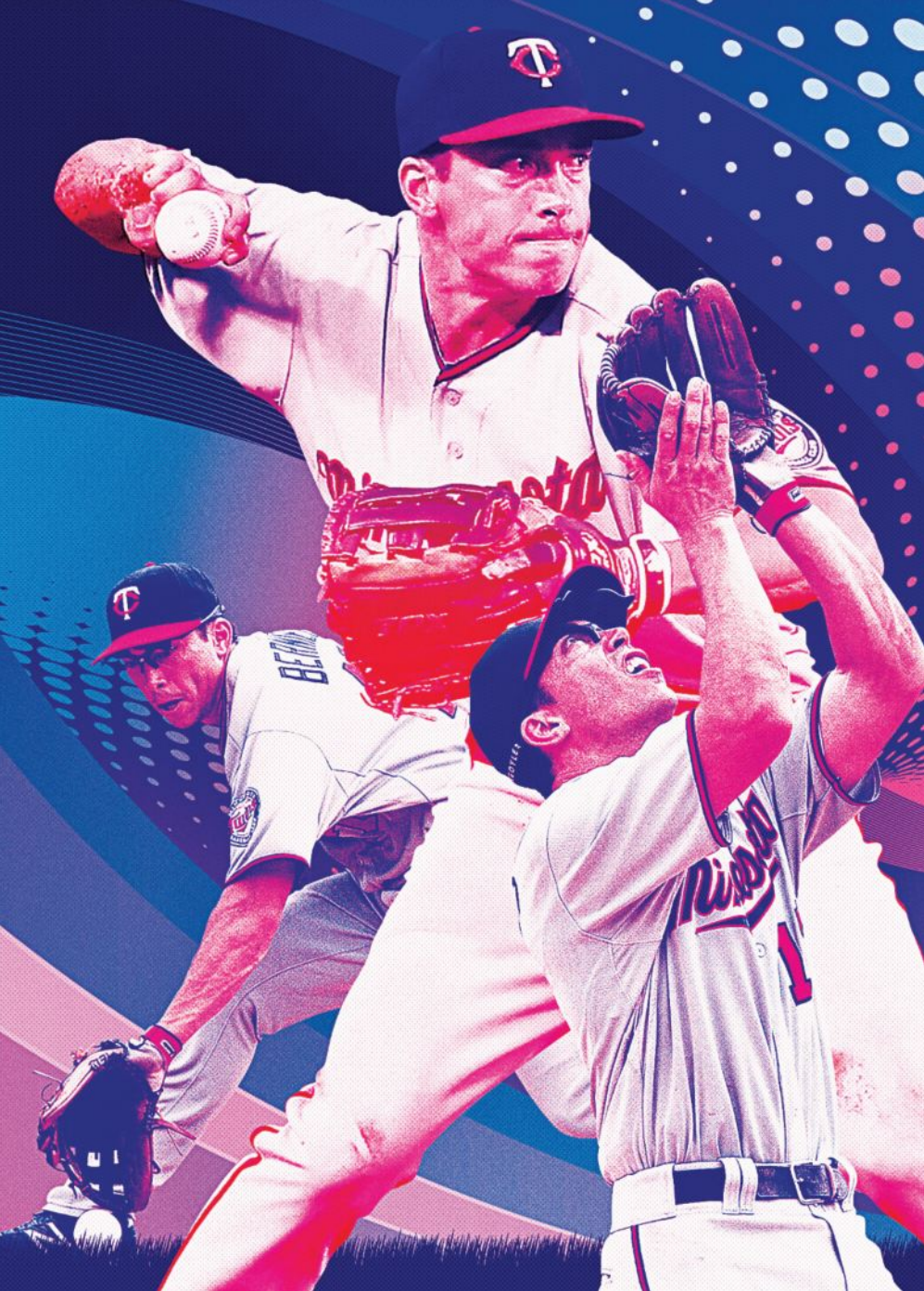
BY JOHN FEINSTEIN

**IT WAS THE FIRST DAY** of spring training in February of 2012. The New York Yankees clubhouse in Tampa was packed with players, coaches, and media. Derek Jeter stood in front of his locker talking to reporters, while Alex Rodriguez moved quickly in and out of the room because it had already been decided that he would speak to the media down the hall in a press conference rather than have people climbing on top of one another in the crowded clubhouse to hear what he had to say.

At a corner locker, near the door, was Doug Bernier. I had written his name down on a long list of players I thought might be worth interviewing for a book about life in minor-league baseball, specifically at the Triple-A level—one step from the glamour, bright lights, and big bucks of the major leagues.

Bernier had caught my eye for several reasons: He was a college graduate, specifically a graduate of Oral Roberts University—not exactly a baseball hotbed. He was about to begin his 11th season as a professional baseball player, and he had spent three days—*three*—in the major leagues.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (FEINSTEIN)



Unlike Moonlight Graham, the character made famous by the movie *Field of Dreams*, Bernier had gotten an at bat in the majors—four of them, to be precise. But he had the same number of hits as Graham: zero.

Just the kind of story I was looking for if—and this was always the biggest if—he was willing and able to tell that story.

As most of my friends and colleagues turned their attention to Jeter and Andy Pettitte and Mariano Rivera, I walked over to Bernier. I could see the look of surprise on his face when he saw someone wearing a media credential approaching.

I introduced myself and explained what I was doing. I never said, “The book is about life in the minor leagues,” because any player sitting in a major-league clubhouse in February is holding out hope that he’s still going to be there in April. Even someone who has spent a grand total of three days in the majors. Instead, I just said the book was about guys who have been up and down during their careers.

Bernier grinned. “Lot more down than up in my career,” he said.

I liked him right away.

Then he added, “Let me see if I can squeeze you in with all these other guys”—he waved a hand at the completely empty space around his locker.

I liked him even more.

A reporter’s life is funny sometimes. Who would have thought that the very first person I introduced myself to during the process of researching a book would become as memorable as anyone I’ve met in 28 years as an author?

Bernier had grown up in California—his dad was an aerospace engineer at Lockheed Martin—and had always been a good athlete, even though he wasn’t very big. He is generously listed as six-foot-one and 185 pounds. Perhaps standing on tiptoes and holding several bricks in his hands he’s that big.

He was a pitcher in high school but figured out that a short right-hander who couldn’t throw 90 miles an hour wasn’t going to go very far, so he focused on being an infielder. He went to junior college for two years and then ended up at Oral Roberts.

“I had interest from some of the big-time baseball schools like Miami and Texas,” he said. “But I knew I probably wouldn’t play much there. I didn’t know a lot about Oral Roberts except they apparently had really good baseball facilities and a pretty good team, and the school wasn’t in California. I figured, Why not?”

Of course, when he arrived in Tulsa, he got some serious culture shock. He

“*The paycheck was the first one I’d ever gotten that had a comma in it,” Bernier said.*”



wasn't prepared for the giant bronze hands formed in prayer in the middle of the campus. He was also caught off guard when he walked into his first class in a T-shirt and shorts and realized everyone else was wearing a shirt and tie. "Went to Walmart and bought a clip-on that afternoon," he said. "Wore it every day for the next two years."

He played well enough to believe he was going to be drafted by a major-league team when he graduated in June of 2002. The major-league baseball draft has 50 rounds, meaning at least 1,500 players are drafted (some teams are given bonus picks, which adds to the number each year). Bernier didn't make the cut.

"It was disappointing, to say the least," he said. "I had put all my eggs in the baseball basket. I wasn't really sure what to do next."

A week later, sitting at home, Bernier got a phone call: An infielder the Colorado Rockies had drafted out of high school had decided to go to college and hadn't signed. Would Bernier be interested in going to Pasco, Washington, to play rookie-league ball for \$850 a month?

"Where do I sign?" was his answer.

Bernier spent the next several years learning the realities of minor-league baseball: Almost every player carries one of two labels—prospect or organization player.

A prospect is almost always a high- or at least mid-level draft pick who the

team believes has a chance to become a major-league player. An organization player is someone who is signed to help fill out minor-league rosters. Most major-league teams have seven minor-league teams—meaning they need between 175 and 200 players to fill their rosters. Only a handful will ever make it to the majors.

As an undrafted free agent, Bernier was never looked at as a prospect. In fact, he was never once an Opening Day starter at any level of the minors. But he worked his way steadily up the ladder to Triple-A and, in June of 2008, was surprised when Tom Runnells, his manager in Colorado Springs, called him into his office to "talk about some defensive adjustments."

Bernier walked in and found Runnells and the coaching staff there but none of the other infielders. "For a split second, I thought, Oh God, I'm 27, they're releasing me," he said. "Organization guys are always expendable."

That wasn't it. "Dougie, Yorvit Torrealba just got suspended," Runnells said. "The Rockies need an extra bat and glove for a few days. It's you."

Bernier wasn't even sure he was hearing right or if he was going to wake up from the dream a few seconds later. Nope, he was going to the major leagues.

When he walked into the Rockies clubhouse, the first person to greet him was Todd Helton, a likely future Hall of Famer.

"Dougie!" he said, hugging him. "I'm so glad to see you here."

Bernier was there for three days. Manager Clint Hurdle gave him a start at shortstop the last day, and he almost got a hit—a line drive headed to left field was snared by Indians shortstop Jhonny Peralta.

The next day, he was back in Colorado Springs. Even so, when his next paycheck arrived, he got another thrill. "I was making \$2,100 a month at that point," he said. "I'd made \$2,400 a *day* in the majors playing for the big-league minimum [\$432,000 a year back then]. The paycheck was the first one I'd ever gotten that had a comma in it."

He grinned. "If I could have afforded it," he said, "I'd have framed it."

By the time I met Bernier, he was 31 and thrilled to be invited to the Yankees major-league training camp. In fact, that spring, when Derek Jeter was recovering from an injury, Bernier played shortstop for much of the preseason. The Yankees had an infield most days of Mark Teixeira (\$22 million a year), Robinson Cano (\$14 million), Alex Rodriguez (\$25 million), and Bernier (\$12,000 a month).


"It was a little intimidating," he said, laughing. "But they all acted as if I were Jeter."

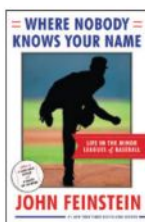
He played like Jeter—hitting .361 for the spring. Of course, once Jeter was

healthy, Bernier was back in Triple-A, where, for the first time in his career, he was a starter on Opening Day. But he was injured early in the season and wondered if he would get another chance to play in 2013.

He did. The Minnesota Twins signed him and, midway through the season, brought him back to the majors. On July 22, 2013, after playing 1,060 minor-league games in which he'd made 3,806 plate appearances, Bernier doubled to left field off Los Angeles Angels pitcher Joe Blanton for his first big-league hit and RBI. It had taken him 11 years and one month to get to that moment.

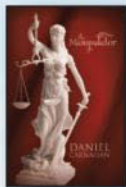
He spent the rest of the 2013 season with the Twins as a backup infielder and was invited to their training camp in 2014. In late March, he was sent back to Triple-A.

There was still plenty of season ahead to try to get back to the majors. It would never occur to Bernier to give up or quit or whine about being sent back to the minor leagues. As much as he would love to live the "major-league life," as the players call it, he still finds it thrilling to go to a ballpark and play baseball every day. His approach to the game remains as enthusiastic as when he was a boy. It reminds me of when I was a boy—loving just to *play* the game. Hope lives forever in guys like Doug Bernier. 



**Feinstein's new bestseller is *Where Nobody Knows Your Name: Life in the Minor Leagues of Baseball*.**

# Great Books for Every Reader



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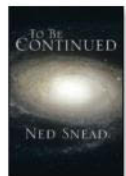
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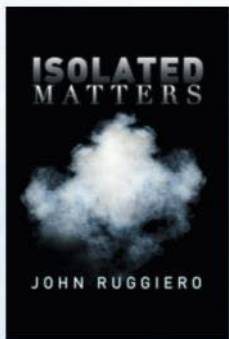
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REMARKABLE BOOKS TO ENJOY AGAIN AND AGAIN. ORDER YOURS TODAY!

# America

We received more than 1,200 reader entries for our Made in America photo contest. Here are the winners.



## A DAY OUT OF TIME

My girlfriends and I were walking around the National Mall when I noticed dark clouds hovering near the Washington Monument. The cherry blossoms look almost like snow, and the monument appears mysterious and medieval. Through the haze, the same photo I had taken so many times had a new spin to it.

**PAMELA DAVIS,**

*Newport News, Virginia*



# *the Beautiful*








## THE SERGEANT'S DAUGHTER

This photo of my daughter, Imij, was taken on Memorial Day 2011 at the Army base in Fort Drum, New York, after her father—my husband, S.Sgt. Christopher Armstead—led the flag team as they lowered the 20-by-38-foot garrison flag and POW flag. Afterward, Imij went into rock-star mode, doing her best Jimi Hendrix impression (*Imij* is *Jimi* spelled backward).

GRETCHEN ARMSTEAD, *San Antonio, Texas*

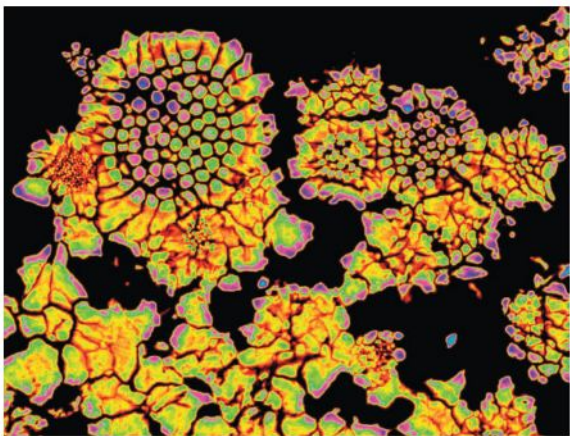
 To see more photo finalists, download the Reader's Digest app or go to [rd.com/july](http://rd.com/july).

**3RD  
PRIZE  
(TIED)**

## SUN GLOW IN STORY TOWN

Jonesborough, the oldest town in Tennessee, is known as the Storytelling Capital of the World. Every October, the community hosts the National Storytelling Festival for aficionados from around the world.

**JAY HURON,**  
*Kingsport, Tennessee*



## LANDSCAPE UNDER A LENS

Using a scanning electron microscope, I magnified pyrite crystal found in Hudson River sediment. The scientific research on these crystals suggests that a comet hit the Atlantic Ocean south of Manhattan and caused a tsunami up the river about 3,000 years ago. This is my version of a dazzling landscape.

**DEE BREGER,** *Saratoga Springs, New York*



# That's Outrageous!

NOT ACCORDING TO PLAN

**A WISCONSIN** man tried to save money by painting the exterior of his house himself. First he took off the old layer of paint with a blowtorch.

**UNFORTUNATELY ...** He successfully removed the paint, but he also removed much of the house when it went up in flames. Source: wbay.com



**A BANK CUSTOMER** saw a man in line packing heat. Not wanting to spook the gunman, he slipped the teller a note informing her.

**UNFORTUNATELY ...** The bank teller thought the customer was saying *he* had a weapon; she had him arrested. As for the man with the gun—he had a permit to carry it. Source: courant.com

**TENS OF THOUSANDS** of people packed St. Peter's Square in Vatican City to hear Pope Francis pray for peace in Ukraine. The ceremony was topped by the release of two white peace doves.

**UNFORTUNATELY ...** A seagull and a crow attacked the symbols of peace. Source: Associated Press

**HOW DID THE** Tampa Woman's Club get people to participate in a charity event? By plying them with champagne and the chance to win a \$5,000 diamond. If that weren't fun enough, the lucky winner would find the shiny bauble in her bubbly!

**UNFORTUNATELY ...** When the lucky winner drank her flute of bubbly, she swallowed her shiny bauble. Source: thedenverchannel.com

**A RUSSIAN WOMAN** named Natalya was thousands of dollars in debt, so she did what any reasonable person would do to get out of paying it: She had a sex-change operation. "Andrian" got a new passport and even managed to borrow more money.

**UNFORTUNATELY ...** Andrian is now on the lam, but he can't get off that easily, said authorities. "If a debtor thinks he can escape that way, he's very much mistaken," said a Russian bailiff. Source: dailystar.co.uk

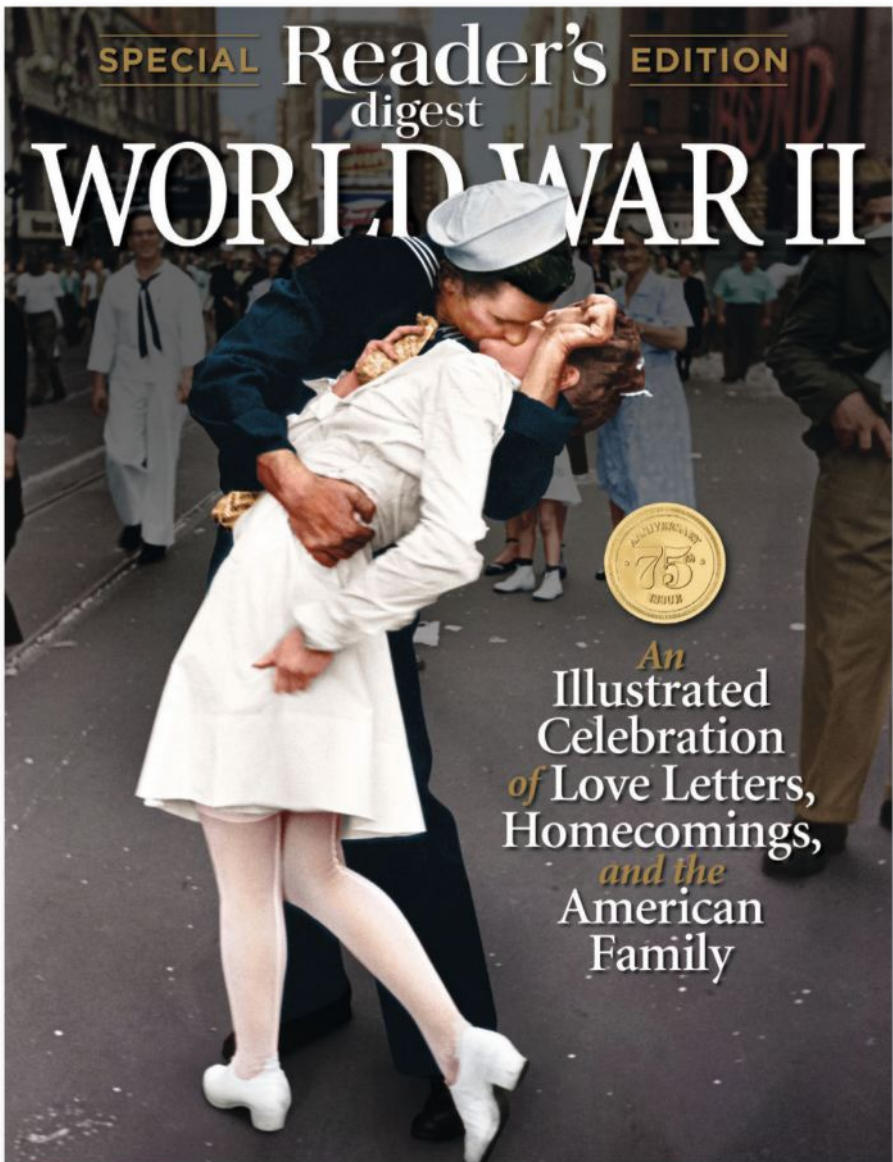
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EDITION

# WORLD WAR II



An  
Illustrated  
Celebration  
*of* Love Letters,  
Homecomings,  
*and the*  
American  
Family

**ON NEWSSTANDS NOW!**



# WHO ? KNEW

## 13 Things Farmers' Markets Won't Tell You

BY MICHELLE CROUCH

**1** Just because the sign says “farmers’ market” doesn’t mean there are any real farmers involved in the makeshift shop. Many so-called farmers’ markets are actually set up by wholesalers who buy the same food you can get in your local grocery store, mark it up considerably, set up stands, and resell it. For a much more authentic experience, look for farmers’ markets that are “producer-only,” meaning they require all vendors to actually grow or make the foods they sell.

**2** Want to save some money? Ask me about “seconds,” visually imperfect fruits and vegetables you can often get by the case at a discount. Also called No. 2 produce, seconds are great for making tomato sauce, salsa, jam, and soup—but they’re perfectly fine to eat as is, too, as long as you don’t mind a few dings.





**3** Don't show up with a set-in-stone shopping list. Part of the fun of a farmers' market is that you never know what you're going to find. So shop first, and then adjust your menu based on what you find.

**4** Seriously? You want oranges in Colorado in July? Find out what grows locally and what's in season before getting your hopes up.

**5** Please don't walk up to me holding your caramel macchiato and say \$3 is too much to pay for a bunch of beets. Did you try to bargain with the barista at Starbucks? I was up at 3 a.m. today harvesting crops just to support my family.

**6** Don't squeeze the peaches to see if they're ripe. Ask me to help you pick out some ripe ones, or look for a warm yellow base color and a fragrant smell. And while we're on the subject, don't husk every ear of corn either. That dries them out.

**7** You can get great deals by arriving at the end of the day, when vendors discount unsold goods so they don't have to haul them back home. But some markets don't allow the practice, so check before you go.

**8** Don't forget us in the winter! Many farmers use greenhouses, cold storage, and other extension methods to make produce available

all year. And dairy products, meat, eggs, and homemade breads never go out of season.

**9** Buying at the start of the season doesn't always save you money. You'll pay a premium to get the first peaches or tomatoes of the year. If you're on a budget, wait a few weeks until a food is abundant, demand dies down, and prices drop.

**10** Get to know your farmer, and be a consistent customer. Once I start to recognize you as a regular, I may get in the habit of slipping some extra in your bag.

**11** Don't know what something is or how to cook it? Just ask. For the best advice, ask the grower what he has that day that you shouldn't miss and how he prepares it.

**12** There's a reason why our produce tastes so much better than what you find in the grocery store. It was probably picked yesterday or even this morning.

**13** Fido may be friendly, but no one is going to be happy if he lifts his leg on a crate of watermelon. Please leave your beloved four-legged friends at home. **R**

Sources: Ann Yonkers, coexecutive director of FreshFarm Markets, which operates 11 markets in the Washington, DC, region; Jenny McGruther, former manager of Crested Butte Farmers Market in Crested Butte, Colorado, and author of *The Nourished Kitchen*; and Lynn Caldwell, market manager for Atherton Market in Charlotte, North Carolina.

# When Brain Injury Leads to Brilliance

BY ALISON CAPORIMO

## THE MISTAKEN MATHEMATICIAN

When muggers brutally attacked college dropout and furniture-store employee Jason Padgett, 43, in Tacoma, Washington, on December 13, 2002, they gave him a concussion—and a higher IQ. After the attack, Padgett began to see mathematical formulas and patterns in his surroundings (similar to Nobel Prize-winning mathematician John Nash). Medical tests revealed that his damaged brain is overcompensating in certain areas that most people do not have access to. Now Padgett turns the designs he sees into

intricate, hand-drawn diagrams called fractals and sells them online via Fine Art America.

## THE INSTANT BEETHOVEN

Derek Amato hit his head in a swimming pool in the autumn of 2006 when he was 39 years old, losing 35 percent of his hearing in one ear and much of his memory. But he gained a miraculous skill: Four days after his accident, Amato sat in a friend's makeshift music studio and was drawn to an electric keyboard. He had never had the slightest interest



in the instrument and couldn't read sheet music, but that didn't stop him from playing a spontaneous concerto ... for six hours. After consulting a physician, Amato learned that he'd developed acquired savant syndrome, in which brain damage causes dormant skills to emerge.

## THE OVERNIGHT EUROPEAN

Try to follow along: Karen Butler, 60, is from Oregon, not England, but she got her accent from her dental surgeon. In 2009, Butler awoke from dental implant surgery with an accent that's a bit British with a Transylvanian twang, and it stuck. This phenomenon, known as foreign accent syndrome (a condition so rare that only about 60 cases have been documented worldwide), is thought to stem from a minor injury to the part of the brain responsible for language pattern and tone.

## THE HUMAN CALENDAR

At the age of ten, Virginia native Orlando Serrell was accidentally hit in the head with a baseball and

developed a headache. After the ache cleared up a few days later, Serrell could spit out the day of the week for any date since August 17, 1979, the day he was struck. Serrell, now 45, has what's called hyperthymestic syndrome, the ability to recall a large catalog of autobiographical events.

## THE ACCIDENTAL ARTIST

At the age of 36, Massachusetts chiropractor Jon Sarkin suffered a stroke and became obsessed with drawing. He had never shown any talent for art yet became so fixated on it that he would rush off in the middle of family dinners to sketch symbols, draw objects, and paint for hours, as ideas continuously came to him. He tried to return to his chiropractic practice, but he couldn't stop doodling. His distraction has paid off: *The New Yorker*, *GQ*, and other publications have featured his dramatic and ghostly drawings, his paintings have sold for up to \$10,000 each, and Tom Cruise's production company bought the rights to his life story. **R**

Sources: *Popular Science*, the *Daily Mail*, *cracked.com*, ABC News



## GO FOURTH AND BARBECUE

For dogs, the Fourth of July is "I Ate That Hot Dog That Fell Off the Grill and Now I'm Going to the Basement Because the Sky Is Exploding" Day.

TOM SCHARPLING

You won't believe who really invented these modern humor trends—or when they did it

# The Founding Fathers Of Funny

BY BRANDON SPECKTOR

## This Man Invented Cat Memes in 1906

Long before BuzzFeed made pet pics a must-click, Harry Whittier Frees made his career photographing live animals in tiny human clothing.

Frees's viral art career began in 1906, when he sold a photo of his cat wearing a party hat to a postcard maker. The public demanded more. So in 1915, Frees obliged with *The Little Folks of Animal Land*, a 250-page anthology in which fully clothed kittens jumped rope, puppies picketed "bone taxes," piglets pushed little wheelbarrows, and any random act of cuteness seemed possible.

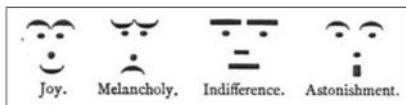
Unlike most of today's viral videos, Frees's work was praised by animal-



protection societies throughout his career. "These unusual photographs of real animals were made possible only by patient, unflinching kindness," Frees said. "LOL, OMG, WIN!!!" his fans might have added.

## This Magazine Invented Emoticons in 1881

The world's top cartoonists made *Puck* America's first successful humor magazine, but these four typeset faces secured its spot in history. *Puck* called its creations "typographical art." We call them emoticons. Whether *Puck's*



editors printed this proto-emoto panel in jest or as instruction to fellow typesetters is unclear. What is clear is the face they'd make today if they could see an iPhone loaded with Emoji: (‘•\_\_•’).



## This Writer Invented Stand-Up Comedy in 1895

Mark Twain may never have honed Tom Sawyer's voice on paper without lots of work honing his own onstage.

Since his days as a reporter, Twain relied on readings for extra income, performing more than 200 shows at men's clubs and lecture halls around

America. Then, in 1895, Twain embarked by steamship on what was likely history's first yearlong comedy world tour.

Speaking from memory on stages in Australia, Africa, India, and elsewhere, Twain performed a farcical

sermon of funny "bits" from the stories and speeches that defined his career. Adding, dropping, and improvising from stage to stage, Twain effectively created (and totally rocked) modern stand-up comedy. You're welcome, Louis CK. **R**

Sources: onemoreriver.org, dangerousminds.net, virginia.edu

GETTY IMAGES

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SEE

THE WORLD ...

—  
*Turn the page* ➔➔





ZUBIN LI/GETTY IMAGES

A high-angle photograph of terraced rice paddies on a hillside. The terraces are built into the slope, creating a series of steps that follow the contour of the land. The paddies are filled with water, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery. The hills are covered in lush green vegetation, and a small wooden structure is visible in the lower-left corner. The overall scene is a beautiful example of traditional agricultural engineering.

## ... DIFFERENTLY

The land looks flat from above, but these Chinese rice paddies are terraced for a better yield. Farmers have created these “steps” in China and the Philippines for as long as two millennia; they’re considered a marvel of ancient engineering.



# Humor in Uniform

## HOW MILITARY ARE YOU?

So you Netflixed *Zero Dark Thirty*, and now you think you're a future Navy SEAL? Prove it: Match the military slang with its English translation.

### MILITARY SPEAK

1. "Getting a kitchen pass from the War Department."
2. "My wife has one in the hangar."
3. "Wilco that, but first, I need to hit the rain locker."
4. "When does she download?"
5. "I've got a beer low-level light." "HOOAH."

### IN ENGLISH

- A. "My wife is pregnant."
- B. "I will comply, but first, I gotta take a shower."
- C. "When is she due to deliver the baby?"
- D. "Excuse me. May I have another drink, please?" "Heard. Understood. Acknowledged."
- E. "I need to ask my wife if I can go out tonight."

### SCORE

#### 0 to 2 correct:

You wear camo to the supermarket.

#### 3 to 4 correct:

You can beat your seven-year-old in Call of Duty.

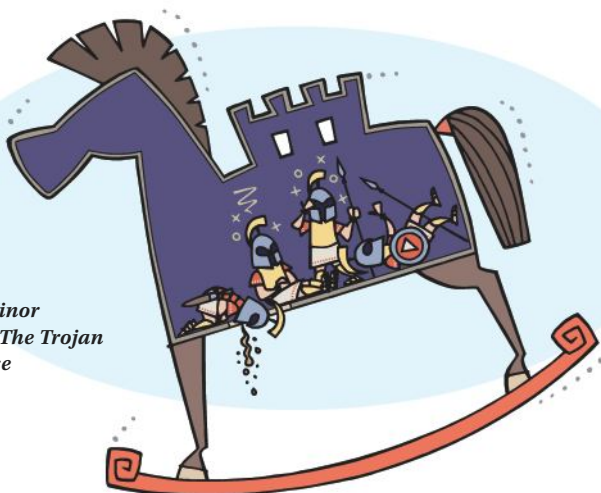
#### All 5 correct:

General Washington, I presume?

Answers: 1: E; 2: A; 3: B; 4: C; 5: D

Source: spousebuzz.com

*Weapon of Minor Destruction: The Trojan Rocking Horse*






IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

# Word Power

*Planning a visit to the Louvre, the Met, London's National Gallery, or another grand museum this summer? First take our quiz to make sure you have an artful vocabulary. Turn the page for answers.*

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

- 1. graphic** ('gra-fik) *adj.*—A: clearly pictured. B: sculpted of marble. C: roughly composed.
- 2. canon** ('ka-nen) *n.*—A: string of images. B: standard for evaluation. C: negative review.
- 3. symmetry** ('si-meh-tree) *n.*—A: framing and matting. B: balanced proportions. C: imitation.
- 4. cartography** (kahr-'tah-gre-fee) *n.*—A: mapmaking. B: painted wagons. C: traveling exhibits.
- 5. panoramic** (pan-oh-'ram-ik) *adj.*—A: of film artistry. B: shown in miniature. C: sweeping.
- 6. opaque** (oh-'payk) *adj.*—A: deceptive. B: not transparent. C: molded in plaster.
- 7. juxtapose** ('juks-tuh-pohz) *v.*—A: sit for a portrait. B: render precisely. C: place side by side.
- 8. kinetic** (kih-'neh-tik) *adj.*—A: copied identically. B: showing movement. C: picturing countryside.
- 9. kitschy** ('ki-chee) *adj.*—A: in a collage. B: tacky. C: macraméd.
- 10. baroque** (buh-'rohk) *adj.*—A: highly ornamented. B: plain in style. C: traditional.
- 11. manifesto** (ma-neh-'fes-toh) *n.*—A: statement of principles. B: gallery opening. C: watercolor technique.
- 12. avant-garde** (ah-vahnt-'gard) *adj.*—A: retro. B: scandalous. C: cutting-edge.
- 13. aesthetics** (es-'theh-tiks) *n.*—A: acid engravings. B: pleasing appearance. C: works in the outdoor air.
- 14. anthropomorphic** (an-throh-puh-'mohr-fik) *adj.*—A: of cave art. B: made from clay. C: humanlike.
- 15. analogous** (uh-'na-leh-ges) *adj.*—A: shapeless. B: made of wood. C: having a likeness.

 To play an interactive version of *Word Power* on your iPad or Kindle Fire, download the Reader's Digest app.

## Answers

**1. graphic**—[A] clearly pictured.

The depiction of the embrace was a little too *graphic* for me.

**2. canon**—[B] standard for evaluation. Monet's works are certainly the *canon* by which to measure other Impressionist paintings.

**3. symmetry**—[B] balanced proportions. Ever the jokester, Dean asked, "When Picasso looked in the mirror, was his face all out of *symmetry* too?"

**4. cartography**—[A] mapmaking. No need to test my *cartography* skills when I've got a GPS in the car.

**5. panoramic**—[C] sweeping. Eric and Christine were overwhelmed by the photo's *panoramic* proportions.

**6. opaque**—[B] not transparent.

Notice the *opaque* colors he chose for the backdrop.

**7. juxtapose**—[C]

place side by side.

Now that you've *juxtaposed* the photos, I agree—they're not at all alike.

**8. kinetic**—[B]

showing movement.

I thought someone was behind me, but it was a particularly *kinetic* statue.

**9. kitschy**—[B] tacky. Leo thinks anything that isn't Rembrandt is just *kitschy*.

**10. baroque**—[A] highly ornamented. Alex's *baroque*-inspired sketches were criticized for being too busy.

**11. manifesto**—[A] statement of principles. Art *manifestos* often come across as pretentious and superior.

**12. avant-garde**—[C] cutting-edge. Holly dropped out of school to join an *avant-garde* painting troupe.

**13. aesthetics**—[B] pleasing appearance. Ironically, Joziah's darker portraits most accurately captured the *aesthetics* of the city.

**14. anthropomorphic**—[C]

humanlike. The artist combined

everyday street items into an *anthropomorphic* figure.

**15. analogous**—[C] having a likeness. Right now, my brain is *analogous* to that flat, empty canvas.

### SHORT AND SWEET

When people save tickets, clippings, or menus—items intended to last only briefly but often placed in scrapbooks—they are collecting **ephemera** (from the Greek *ephemerōs*, "lasting a day"). Such items may not have been made by artists, but over time they acquire value for their place in history. And a cultural trend that passes away quickly is considered **ephemeral**.

### VOCABULARY RATINGS

**9 & below:** Light sketcher

**10-12:** Skilled artisan

**13-15:** Old master



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SLEEP

## Always Tired?

Alternate between mental and physical activities (do desk work, then stretch; watch TV, then get water), and you'll improve your alertness, according to psychologytoday.com.



RECIPES

## Creative Stuffed Peppers

We searched the best of the food blogs to find recipes for this in-season superstar. Fillings are as varied as Buffalo chicken, breakfast eggs and cheese, and a crunchy rice-and-beans combo that gets its texture from Grape-Nuts cereal.



READ UP AT [RD.COM/JULY](http://RD.COM/JULY)



TECH

## Best Photo Apps

VSCO Cam offers simple, straightforward editing tools to make your pics look as great as possible before you share them. For more advanced filters, frames, and meme text, we like the creative Photo Editor by Aviary. (Both apps are available on iOS and Android.)

HUMOR

## Dumb Job Applicants

HR pros dish about 25 of the funniest interviews, including one with this dope: "The candidate said that by crossing the Maryland state line, he was in violation of his probation but felt the interview was worth risking possible jail time."

**t** MOST RETWEETS  
ON TWITTER

ADVICE

## Words That Make You Sound Weak

Do you use negative, "slow down" language when you speak? Mark Divine, author of *The Way of the SEAL* (Reader's Digest Books), suggests positive, active swaps like *learned for failed* and *definitely for maybe*.

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# Quotable Quotes



**THERE IS NO FUTURE  
IN ANY JOB. THE  
FUTURE LIES IN  
THE PERSON WHO  
HOLDS THE JOB.**

**DR. GEORGE CRANE, columnist**

The most courageous  
act is still to think  
for yourself.  
Aloud.

**COCO CHANEL**



*A ship in harbor is safe, but that  
is not what ships are built for.*

**JOHN A. SHEDD, author**

Knowledge is knowing that a  
tomato is a fruit; wisdom is not  
putting it in a fruit salad.

**MILES KINGTON, journalist**



**YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO  
WATCH OUT WHEN SOMEONE  
STEEPLES THEIR FINGERS.**

**GEORGE W. BUSH**

**BOOKS ARE LIKE PEOPLE,  
IN THAT THEY'LL TURN  
UP IN YOUR LIFE WHEN  
YOU MOST NEED THEM.**

**EMMA THOMPSON**



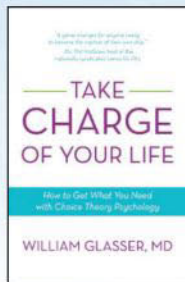
Every child is  
an artist. The  
problem is how to  
remain an artist  
once we grow up.

**PABLO PICASSO**

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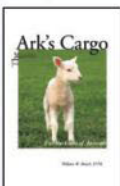
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for frequent heartburn.

**#1** PRESCRIBED  
Acid Blocker Brand



**Nexium**  
(24HR)

Based on IMS Health Data. Total Nexium Prescriptions 2006 - 2013. Nexium 24HR may take 1 - 4 days for full effect. Use as directed for 14 days to treat frequent heartburn.